THE SENSATIONAL LANDSCAPE:
THE HISTORY OF SENSATIONALIST IMAGES OF THE ARCTIC, 1818-1910.

by

Laura Stevenson-Waldie

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Preface

This thesis is a study of the public perception of the Arctic through explorers' journals and the modern press in America and Britain. The underlying question of this thesis is what exactly was the role of the press in forming public opinions about Arctic exploration in general? Did newspaper editors in America and Britain simply report what they found interesting based upon their own knowledge of Arctic explorers' journals, or did these editors create that public interest in order to profit from increased sales? From a historical perspective, these reasons relate to the growth of an intellectual and social current that had been gaining strength in the Western world throughout the nineteenth century: the creation of the mythic hero. In essence, the mythical status of Arctic explorers developed in Britain, but was matured and honed in the American press, particularly in the competitive news industry in New York. Here, the creation of the heroic Arctic explorer resulted largely from the vicious competitiveness of the contemporary press.

Although the content of published Arctic exploration journals in the early nineteenth century did not change dramatically, the accuracy of those journals did. Exploration journals up until 1850 tended to focus heavily on the conventions of the sublime and picturesque to describe these new lands. However, these views were inaccurate, for these conventions forced the explorer to view the Arctic very much as they viewed the Swiss Alps or the English countryside. These images demonstrated very little factual accuracy. In fact, British exploration journals of the Arctic in the early half of the nineteenth century were enhanced by the skills of hired ghost writers and book editors, such as John Murray, who wanted to sell as many copies of the journal as possible. To do this, the journal had to made as exciting as possible to sell many copies.

The creation of the modern press and the replacement of the sublime and picturesque with sensationalism helped to change these older conventions. With sensationalism, the new image of the Arctic was still at a variance from what we now think of as reality. One reason was for this was the desire the explorers and of American and British newspaper editors, such as James Gordon Bennett in New York, to make the Arctic as exciting as possible. Another reason was that these explorers went to the Arctic with preconceived notions of what the region was like, thanks to the early expedition journals which highlighted the sublime and picturesque qualities of the region. The explorers had become sensitive to the information that confirmed their preconceptions and often ignored contradictory evidence. These errors of perception continued right into the 1860s by journalists and newspaper editors who had little experience with the areas they wrote of.

Tragically, during the nineteenth century it was not the accuracy of the reporting of these explorers such as Sir John Franklin, John Rae, Robert Peary, and Frederick Cook that was of the utmost importance to the press or public, nor was it their scientific achievements, nor even their attainments. What counted was the tragedy, failure, hardship and controversy. If Franklin had lived to tell about his 1845 expedition, if Dr. John Rae had never discovered bodies on King William Island, or if Cook and Peary had agreed that they could share the attainment of the North Pole, there would be much less interest in them today. By being shrouded in mystery in the press and writing about the tragedy of death, suffering and cannibalism, these explorers were elevated to mythic status in the press, a status which is difficult to shake even a century later. If an embellished story sold thousands of copies, the editors had no problem with deepening that embellishment.

To the vast majority of newspapers in New York and London, this kind of ennoblement of Arctic explorers-- and its subsequent sensationalised stories--was far more important than any scientific knowledge that would come from the expedition or the conquest of the Arctic.

Acknowledgement

For Jack, Jean, and Maureen.

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Notes on Sources

In general, nineteenth century American and British newspapers gave very little press time to the exploration of Asia, Australia, the US and Canada, and certain regions of South America, but focused more on the two extremes--the cold polar regions and the steamy jungles of Africa and Brazil. Perhaps this is because all those regions, with the exception of the polar regions and the African continent, had pretty much been thoroughly explored and, for the most part, settled.

The time frame of this thesis is from 1835 to 1910, which is considered the height of Arctic exploration. The first date corresponds with the beginning of the modern press in America and how it played a role in the shaping of the Arctic in the imagination of the readers. It was also the period when explorers' journals were at their most popular with the reading public and they were critiqued in the local newspapers of the time The latter refers to the period where the last conquerable obstacle in the Arctic was attained--the North Pole. It is also the time where the press began to intervene and, at times, force itself upon the creation of the Arctic explorer myth.

Though this thesis talks about images, not all forms of imagery have been given equal weight. It is, rather, a study of imagery though words--the explorers' journals and the words of the press in America and Britain with reference to Arctic exploration. J.C.H. King and Henrietta Lidchi's book *Imaging the Arctic* was used for this study, though as its focus is photography and film, it was not used in the development of the thesis' analytical framework, but only as substantiating evidence where necessary.

Several newspapers have been used in the development and structure of the thesis. In Britain, a broad range of newspapers that covered all facets of society were used. The *London Illustrated News* was a popular paper who catered more to the working class with

its utilisation of cartoons, drawings, lack of business and financial news, and bigger font. *The London Times,* which was more expensive than most papers, catered more to the upper class society with its society pages and weekly financial news. These two papers combined had 85% of Britain's national readership from 1835 to 1910.

In America, there were several newspapers. In New York alone, there was the *Herald*, the *Sun*, the *World*, and the *Times*. The former two were more adhered to the middle classes, the *World* catered to the working class and the *Times* was the financial paper until the creation of the *Wall Street Journal.* Together, these papers covered nearly 100% of the readership of New York and of all newspapers in circulation in the United States, New York out-sold more newspapers than Los Angeles, Chicago and Atlanta combined. Only New York and London newspapers were chosen because on an international level, they were the direct sources for news from most smaller cities on both continents. They also boasted that largest numbers of reporters covering news and they clearly established the patterns for writing about exploration as well as being leaders in the sensationalising of the press. In some instances, newspapers changed their names--for example, the *Herald* in 1870 became the *New York Herald* to distinguish itself from the new Los Angeles *Herald.* These changes are reflected in the footnotes and are not explained in the text of the thesis.

Introduction

More than a century and a half has passed since the news reached Britain that the 1845 Franklin expedition to discover the Northwest Passage had failed. For years, the British and American press speculated as to what caused the disaster, while other reports chronicled the numerous British and American expeditions that searched the Canadian Arctic for clues and answers. Few other events in the history of British world exploration received more press time than the fate of and search for Franklin. Not even Robert Falcon Scott's failed South Pole expedition of 1913 received as much attention as Franklin's did. In fact Franklin, throughout his long Arctic career, had been a much loved subject of the British and American press. His overland and sea expeditions through the Canadian North were followed and reported on, his published accounts were critiqued, and his public lectures were all highly promoted in the British press. But Franklin did not solicit this attention completely on his own; but he had both the blessings and the representation of Sir John Barrow, the Second Secretary of the British Admiralty. This thesis is an examination of the interaction between the British and American popular press and Arctic explorers, like Franklin, in creating a popular and universal image of the Arctic through reporting techniques and verbal imagery. Investigating how both the press and the explorer used each other to promote their own ends helps to explain the public's growing interest in Arctic exploration well into the twentieth century. In fact, it was Franklin's use of the media that was a precedent setting situation. As will be shown, Frederick Cook and Robert Peary also used the modern American media to wage their own person war against one another to prove who had obtained the North Pole first.

A study of newspaper headlines and personal letters of Franklin to his promoters reveals what the common public in Britain knew about Franklin and of the lands he was exploring more clearly than a study of the expedition accounts alone. This thesis will also

look at some commonly held theories about the news media's need for sensationalism and how the development of that sensationalist reporting style illuminated the broader issues of control of the press over the knowledge of and images of Arctic exploration held by the reading public. Though images of unknown lands and the creation of the heroic myth are often associated with nationalism and imperialism, this is not the focus of this thesis. This will be a study on how the increasing sensationalist reporting styles of the British and American newspaper media were influenced by eighteenth century conventions which created widely held images of the Arctic and served to increase readership on both sides of the Atlantic.

In the end, the attainment of the Northwest Passage or the North Pole did not signify anything important globally. It resulted in no imperial gain, no scientific understanding, no commercial goal was achieved, and it lacked all essential benefit to mankind. Despite this, the discovery of the Northwest Passage and the North Pole were considered by many two of the most significant triumphs of their time. Why then are such a discoveries considered so significant when all they achieve, at terrible costs, are personal prestige and recognition? Perhaps it is because these regions had for centuries been considered an elusive goal. By the time the Northwest Passage was discovered, geographical exploration of all continents led by British explorers had become an important part of the European identity. Equally important was that the British and American newspapers were sparring with each other to be the first to bring the readers new and updated information each day on the search efforts to find Franklin.

From a journalistic view, these reasons conjure up a chicken-and-egg theory as to the press's role in forming public opinions about Arctic exploration in general. Did the media in America and Britain simply report what was interesting to the people or did the media create that public interest? From a historical perspective, these reasons relate to the growth of an intellectual and social current that had been gaining strength in the Western

world throughout the nineteenth century: the creation of the mythic hero.

Chapter one focuses on the creation of the Arctic myth in western society from ancient times to the early exploration attempts of the British navy. The nineteenth century was a time of great exploration, both by sea and overland. In society, the welfare of the people seemed to come a distant second to the need to explore new lands. The explorers who achieved these remarkable feats of exploration became more than just popular heroes. They were people to be revered and admired, and subjects for promoters and press to exploit. Explorers were perhaps the most celebrated icons of their time in Britain, for they confirmed the ideals of heroism, romance, and adventure. They were pictured in the press as journeying into the humid, steamy jungles of Africa or the cold, white, wastelands of the high Arctic.

Chapter Two looks at the creation of the Arctic narrative, using Franklin's two overland expeditions as examples. By the early nineteenth century, Arctic explorers were being promoted through several different means. They were highly desired and very well-paid public speakers at concert halls. They, and their images of the new lands they explored, became the subjects of painters, sculptors, storywriters, early photographers, and budding new journalists. Franklin was no stranger to the world of public relations. In 1822, he topped the billing for all public lectures that year in London by drawing in nearly 75,000 to listen to his accounts of harrowing overland expedition across the Arctic Sea[1]. Because of Franklin's successes, and subsequent failures, Arctic exploration topped the lists of all public lectures in London throughout the nineteenth century and reached its peak in 1860 with nearly nine million seats sold that year to hear Francis McClintock lecture for four nights a week for five months on his discovery of the fate of Franklin[2].

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[1] P. Bailey, *Music Hall: the Business of Pleasure.* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), 98.
[2] Ibid., 112.

People from as far away as South America and South Africa came to hear McClintock speak. There was perhaps no better example of the public promotion of the explorer-myth than the McClintock lectures. Such events were one of the key public relations tools of the era and they represented explorers, like Franklin, in supremely heroic terms.[3] Equally as important, explorers were well promoted in print. They and their heroic adventures were featured in their written exploration accounts, juvenile fiction, and biographies. Here Franklin was assisted by Sir John Barrow and John Murray to create a highly readable and entertaining narrative. Narratives, as will be seen, were the preferred choice of readers as the British popular press still had not developed as strong a hold in Britain as it had in America, because of Britain's extremely high tax levies on books.

The popular press such as illustrated dailies such as the *London Illustrated News* and *The Daily Mirror* became more accessible and affordable by the 1850s. It was the popular press that reached the widest audience throughout the later half of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. The interest in Franklin by the press was not unique. From 1820-1920, explorers and journalists cultivated close ties with each other. During this period, newspapers were influential in establishing images of and interest in unexplored lands. Not only did members of the press sponsor expeditions (the search for Franklin most notably), they also encouraged exploration by paying large sums for exclusive accounts from the explorers. Also, the sensational style of press coverage helped make the search for the Northwest Passage a significant cultural factor in the development of mass-market journalism.[4] Chapter three examines the birth of the modern press in America and Britain and how it was used to promote the heroic image of the Arctic

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[3] J. MacKenzie, *Propoganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion,1860-1960.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) 111.

[4] JH Weiner, *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1859-1914.* Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1988) 280.

explorer in society.

Those involved in the business of exploration knew that it often bore little resemblance to the truth in the accounts that were given to the public, but the depiction of exploration was rarely changed once formats were discovered that not only were mutually beneficial to the explorers and the media, but popular with the hero-seeking British and American public. The British popular press created the sensationalising of the hero-myth in order to sell more papers. Historians and geographers have agreed that what is *perceived* to exist is often as important as what *actually* exists or happens.[5]

To those who study the history of journalism, the term "sensationalism" is often a negative one. James Gordon Bennett was the father of sensationalism and no other journalist in the history of American newspapers was as successful as he in using the sensational to sell newspapers. Sensationalism is just as prevalent in today's mass media as it was in Bennett's day and in fact the term sensational has not altered much over the century. Sensationalism, then as now, is a journalistic marketing ploy used to inspire, entice, and emotionally captivate as wide a readership as possible that, for whatever reason, is mainly concerned with being entertained rather than informed. Even today, these basic methods of attracting an audience are widely accepted goals adopted by journalists concerned with intellectual idealism, as well as those who emphasise "trash" or "reality TV". However, it must be noted that the most important defining aspect of sensationalism is the treatment of news, which includes literary style and content as well as layout including pictures, artwork, type-set, and photography. Just the mere look of an article adds to the overall message of the piece. If British and American newspapers engaged in sensationalism to sell the Franklin mystique, clearly they were not passive disseminators of

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[5] J.W. Watson, "The Role of Illusion in North American Geography: A Note on the Geography of the North American Settlement." *Canadian Geographer*, 13 (1) 1969, 15.

geographical fact. They played an active role in translating the Franklin saga into popular perception, even to the extent of embarking on the Franklin hero-myth creation. Chapter Four looks at what happened after Franklin's fate was determined, and as will be seen, the extreme lengths that editors went to report the sensational went beyond the boundaries of decency.

If British and American newspapers engaged in such blatant sensationalism, clearly they were not casual disseminators of scientific knowledge. On the contrary, the press played a very active role in depicting these events even to the extent of creating and maintaining a framework of heroic myth creation that the readers could grasp onto and make flourish over the decades. Chapter Five looks more closely at James Gordon Bennett Jr., the *New York Herald* editor who was as fascinated in the lure of the Arctic as his readers were. With his tastes for the sensational, he helped to create a sense of national hero. The British press did not invent the exploitation of heroism. They have been found all through history from Greek and Roman tragedies to modern novels. But what is the definition of hero and how is it important to this study?

The Oxford English Dictionary states that the definition of hero is 1. "A mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength" and 2. "A man admired and emulated by his society for his achievements and qualities."[6]. There have been many studies of what constitutes a hero over the last several decades, including Joseph Campbell in 1949. In this classic book, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell examines myths and folk tales from all over the world that draw together common parallels in order to determine generalities about the life-cycles of the mythic hero. Campbell describes the hero as a single minded individual who has drive,

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[6] *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969. 514.

miraculous courage, unbounded intelligence and physical attributes that appear super-human. Though Franklin is perceived as a hero because he was admired by the British people for having the courage to venture out into a land that most Britons would never dream of going to, he does not fit well into Campbell's model. Few explorers, in fact, ever reach this mythical, almost messianic status. Franklin may have possessed miraculous courage, but he did not possess unbounded intelligence or super-human attributes. Franklin was not as well read or as gifted with his writing abilities as were his Arctic contemporaries, and at age 59 in 1844, he had quite a time in convincing the British Admiralty that he was fit and well enough to command the 1845 Expedition. In fact, the mere possibility that he was not physically up to the challenge may have contributed to the demise of the expedition. The fact that very few heroes of the Arctic actually reach Campbell's final stage of mythic status is unimportant to this study. However, men like Franklin, Cook, and Peary still personified the public's perceived greatness of their profession and can still be used as symbols for those interested in justifying their popularity in their respective countries. These Arctic heroes served well to perform the desired function of their most important mediator--the press--this being able to sell large qualities of newspapers.

Chapter Six looks at the seedier side of heroism, with Robert Peary, the self-professed hero, as the example. His intense self-promotion not only set a lifelong feud between himself and rivals Frederick Cook, but also set the stage for one of the most intense media wars in history. It also allowed the media unprecedented opportunity to foster the creation and perpetuation of the explorer myth in the minds of its readers. So in a sense, the media had a direct bearing on the development and course of the explorer myth both in Britain and America.

Because of the number of newspapers in America and Britain, only a few have been thoroughly looked at. *The London Times* and the *London Illustrated News* cross the

broadest spectrum of readership in Britain. The *Times* was aimed more at the middle and upper classes, while the *Illustrated News* catered more to the working classes because of its strong emphasis on pictures and drawings. In New York, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *New York Times* were more business oriented, where as the *New York Herald* was maintained on a basis of sensationalism, hence the hero-making qualities are inherent. These newspapers not only boasted the widest readerships and highest sales numbers, they were also a direct and indirect source of international news for papers from other regions of the world. They also had the largest number of reporters working abroad and they established the patterns for writing about Arctic exploration, and were leaders in the sensationalising of the press.

Chapter One

"Images of Our Country's Reasoning... Creating the Arctic Myth."

On April 2, 1956, Life magazine featured an Ahiarmiut family on its cover. For most readers of the magazine, this was the first glimpse of these people who lived in the Keewatin District of the Northwest Territories. Life had chosen the Ahiarmiut family as representatives of the Canadian Inuit who maintained the most primitive lifestyle of all Inuit tribes.[7] This family trio at once evokes a timeless image, that of the Madonna and Child, with Joseph or one of the angels or saints looking on. It is reminiscent of such Italian Renaissance paintings as the "Madonna di Loreto" by Raphael, or Tommaso's "Madonna and Child with Angel".[8] Their ennoblement could present an attractive ideal, of an age lost and found in modern times, even though the article itself makes romanticised and ill-informed remarks about the Inuit way of life.[9] But where did these images come from. Life Magazine did not create these images completely on their own; rather they had been passed down from generations before. The idea of romanticising and falsifying the Arctic is nearly as old as history itself.

In the late eighteenth century, before the popularity of the modern press blossomed, the most powerful means of describing unexplored lands came from books. Both non-fiction books, such as travel accounts and ships' logs, and fiction which included novels and epic poems, played a role in creating a vision of a mythical landscape for many readers. These books, however, had been read by relatively few people in society, but what these books reported gained acceptance far beyond the reading public.

Though most Canadians have never ventured into the Arctic, the north, as both a

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[7] Alan Rudolph Marcus, "Reflecting on Contested Images" in J.C.H. King and Henrietta Lidchi, *Imaging the Arctic*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 190.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid*, 190-191.

place and an idea, is well imbedded in the national psyche.[10] References to the exploration of the Arctic reach as far back into Western culture as classical Greece. In 457 BC, the Greek philosopher and historian Herodotus trekked through the north country of Greece in search of the famed Mount Olympus. He wrote about a country wild with blowing snow and humans dressed in furs. He believed he had found the end of the Earth.

Today, classical historians believe Herodotus travelled to Lvov in the Ukraine where he witnessed Northern Europeans struggling to survive a mini ice-age that would last another 25 years in that region[11]. Herodotus published this and other travel accounts and influenced a new generation of explorers.

Pytheas of Masillia had been so greatly influenced by Herodotus' account that he set out in a boat to see how far north he could go. He likely became the first southern European to cross the Arctic circle and give a description of the Aurora Borealis, during a voyage in which he circumnavigated Britain before searching for a mythical land he called Ultima Thule[12]. Future Greek philosophers discounted Pytheas's account, but recently these claims have been re-evaluated, although there is a debate brewing as to the location of Ultima Thule. It may have been Iceland, Greenland, or perhaps the Orkney or Shetland Islands.

The importance of Pytheas's claim lies not in the actual descriptions, but in the scepticism his accounts raised with readers. Scholars of the day questioned his account because the Arctic had been perceived as an inhospitable place to explore, let alone live in. This belief influenced European perceptions of the Arctic well into the nineteenth century.

Over the centuries, the Middle and Far East had been explored by Europeans,

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[10] Pamela Stern, "The History of Canadian Photography: Issues of Territorial and Cultural Sovereignty" in JCH King and Henrietta Lidchi, *Imaging the Arctic.* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998) 117.
[11] Stanley Martins, *Ancient Greek Mythology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 37.
[12] K. Witaker, "The Problem with Pytheas." *Mythology*, vol 21, #10 June 1990, 167.

North and South America fell under Spanish, Portuguese and British control, the Pacific and Atlantic oceans were claimed and mapped by European sea powers, but the Arctic remained an unknown and feared place.

Finally in 1440, the French Humanist Francois Rabelais became the first to bring the Arctic into the consciousness of all Europeans with his widely translated novel *Gargantua and Pantegruel.* This novel, in four parts, is a fictitious record of a voyage to complete the Northwest Passage that includes descriptions of living in the frozen north with a fur-clad race.

Albert Lefranc, a travel historian working in France in the early twentieth century theorised that Rabelais' main inspiration came from the travel of Jacques Cartier and John Cabot. Cabot stirred the imagination in England with his tales of thick Newfoundland fog, cold snow, and seas teeming with fish. Since Cartier and Cabot never moved beyond the sub Arctic, Rabelais assumed the high Arctic was also a snowy, foggy place teeming with fish. As his account gained popularity with readers, the French court of Francois I declared Rabelais' adventure novel in 1583 to be a true and accurate description of the Arctic[13].

From 1550 to 1780 travel accounts opened the unknown world to the literate British public. Many of these accounts gave detailed ethnographic or geographical descriptions, but most became simply tales of adventure, with some romance, and always spiced with facts of rather suspicious accuracy. Few of the Arctic descriptions were more fanciful, and popular, than that of Pierre de la Martiniere, a French surgeon who served on the Danish science expedition of 1653 that sailed to the Barents Sea and Novaya Zemlya. Martiniere's book owed more to fancy and sensationalism than to fact, both in the narrative of new fauna and native inhabitants, and the accompanying map had no

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[13] Christopher Hibbert, *The Reign of Francois I* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 188.

resemblance to the maps of the time or of those since. Despite the inaccuracies, no one in Europe knew better, and the account became a popular one.

As with most nationalities, the British were more impressed by the achievements of their own explorers. This desire to follow their own explorers led to a wide scale passion in England throughout most of the eighteenth century to find a route through the Northwest Passage. By 1750, the assault on the Arctic was led primarily by the British Navy. This coincided with Parliament's promise in 1745 to pay anyone 20,000 pounds for discovering a passage through Hudson's Strait. Yet, the failures of such veteran explorers as Thomas Knight, Samuel Hearne, and several expeditions led by Arctic whalers, who were considered the heartiest and fittest of all Europeans in the Arctic, made the Arctic more fascinating to the people back home in Britain. The real belief that the Arctic might never be conquered arose during this period. Like the hunt for Eldorado down the Orinoco River in Brazil, or the search for the lost kingdom of Solomon in the African interior, the fact that so little was known about the Arctic, even after years of exploration, only added to the power it held in the imagination of the British. It seemed to the British public that nature was manifested not only at its harshest but its most inscrutable in the Arctic.

References to the Arctic in eighteenth century literature encouraged these images, using unknown areas as sources of mystery, vastness and danger. Most writers were ignorant of the Arctic and used other writers' descriptions as influences for their own novels. Mountain vistas and wide-open pastoral landscapes played a large part in the British mentality of self and beauty. This fascination with alpine areas included the same stereotypes as the "icy grandeur" of the Arctic. What they shared was "an asymmetry that violated all classical canons of regularity" [14] This feature became known as the sublime.

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[14] Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory (Ithaca: New York, 1959) 126.

Simply put the sublime refers to something that is outstanding in spiritual, intellectual and moral worth. Something that is sublime, is deemed to not have any earthly comparison. Therefore landscapes such as mountains, oceans, and great rivers which were awe-inspiring for their sheer size, were believed to be God-like in appearance. These landscapes were to be respected as insurmountable objects, and feared for their power to crush humanity.

Although little was known about Arctic geography in the early nineteenth century, the British public had definite ideas about the region. John Watson argues that the geography of any region results as much from how we think we should see it as from what is actually seen.[15] Exploration uses this very process of identifying the unknown, combining expectation and illusion with empirical reality. The British perceptions of regions that were non-British developed out of the conceptions at the start of the nineteenth century were not perceived to be distorted, but were considered the truths of their time. It has been suggested that the visual world can be represented by a widely held single concept or mode of perception.[16] For British explorers from 1750 to 1850, the two most important schemata for observing the Arctic through words and pictures became the sublime and the picturesque.[17]

French audiences were already familiar with the concepts of the sublime and picturesque in rhetoric and poetry with Nicholas Boileau-Desperaux's 1674 translation of a treatise by Greek philosopher, Longinus in 128 AD. The British, however, were finally introduced to these concepts when in 1758 Edmund Burke published *A philosophical*

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[15] J.W. Watson, "The Role of Illusion in in North American Geography: A Note on the Geography of the North American Settlement" *Canadian Geographer*, 13 (1969), 10.
[16] E.H. Gombrich, "The Evidence of Images". *Interpretation, Practice and Theory* (Baltimore: Rainbow Press, 1969) 97.
[17] I.S.MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Map of the North, 1845-1859" in: Coates, K and Morrison, W.R. *Interpreting Canada's North.* Toronto: Copp, Clark, Pitman, 1989) 19.

enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful. Burke made the sublime and picturesque coherent and unified theories that became the chief aesthetics of the time. *A philosophical enquiry* became a textbook for all those who wanted to view nature in its purest and unspoiled form. These concepts became so widely accepted that William Wordsworth proclaimed them to be "the images of our country's reasoning"[18] .

Burke's sublime also referred to the surprising, the geography of vastness-vast open space that defies definition or imagination, the awe-inspiring phenomena that "lifts the soul, to exalt it to ecstasy: so that, participating, as it were, in the splendours of the divinity"[19].

Sublimity, said Burke, was present in the natural world when a landscape reflected nature at its extreme and most wild, beyond human control and inspiring fear and submission in the observer. Some examples of this would be open spaces such as an ocean, a prairie, mountain peaks or abysses, snow storms, hurricanes, and tornadoes. The sublime geography, logically and emotionally, could not be conquered, but if an explorer failed and barely lived to tell about it, he was hailed as a national hero. If the sublime killed the explorer, he was raised to deity status. Burke described the sublime as the emotion of terror, especially when in confrontation with the unknown whether it be landscapes or human emotions. The sublime evokes terror, fear and a sense that what the viewer is observing, on some level, was not real, but imagined.

Although Burke's thesis served as a general philosophical approach to viewing landscapes in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the sublime could be applied easily to both nature and to other aspects of life that were considered frightful and

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[18] Douglas Wilson, *The Romantic Dream: Wordsworth and the poetics of the Unconsciousness.* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993) 218.
[19] S.H.Monk, *The Sublime: a Study of Critical Theories in XVIII Century England.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960) 250.

impossible. Both the world's highest mountain and the horrors of war and murder were sublime, for they evoked fear in the reader or viewer. According to Burke's theories of power, terror, and grandeur, the Arctic was viewed as the most sublime and terrible part of unexplored world.

As eighteenth century English gentlemen travelled throughout Europe conducting their Grand Tours of the continent's major cultural centres, many of them found difficulty in classifying all of nature into Burke's categories of the sublime and beautiful. The result was the development of the picturesque.

Popularised in the 1790s by William Gilpin and Uvedale Price, the picturesque was a convention that was aimed to give an observer the opposite feeling to the sublime. Instead of feeling fear or Divine power, the picturesque was a feeling of pastoral beauty. the perfect picturesque landscape was something that described as a picture. In other words, the viewer looked at the landscape as if looking at a painting. A good landscape required a strong prominent foreground, the sides of the landscape to be framed, the view should follow the rule-of-thirds where background, middle ground and foreground each take a third of the view, and displays of like colours was important for continuity of landscape. From this ideal vision of the landscape, it was believed that the viewer would feel peace rather than fear within the landscape. Gilpin felt variation from irregular landscapes to course surface texture lay at the heart of defining the picturesque. Yet, despite this emphasis, the picturesque became conventional, and often times very oversimplified at least in part because Gilpin so completely defined the aspects of the picturesque such as the correct shape hills should take, right down to the number of cattle required in a painting to make a pasture picturesque.

According to I.S.MacLaren, the typical picturesque view of the Arctic became a prospect or a viewing station usually set on a moderate rise, looking out over a foreground, a lower middle ground through which a river meandered, and an enclosed

background of bluish hills or mountains while at the sides, trees would frame the scene and encourage a single perspective[20]. The British, who discovered the picturesque abroad, therefore were achieving three purposes: they were looking for reminders of Britain by stamping foreign tracts of land as being British in appearance. They also conducted their travels/explorations in an orderly manner something that was necessary to get the most out of these landscape perceptions. But, most importantly, travellers were nourishing their own aesthetic identity as being British. These travellers wanted to see the gentle hill-and-dale topography of their home counties or "the more rugged but still composed lacustrine beauty of the English Lake District"[21].

Due to the absence of Gilpin's strictly defined conventions, the picturesque simply could not exist, and created dangers to those who explored unknown lands like the Arctic. Special adaptations were needed to survive the terrain, although, the need to find the picturesque outweighed the need for survival. A prime example of this need to find the picturesque occurred on John Franklin's overland expedition to the Arctic Sea in 1819-1822. In October 1822, a camp was erected on a hill that had been partly chosen for aesthetic reasons. Franklin's surgeon, John Richardson, commented in a letter back to England that "we could not have selected a more convenient or beautiful spot. The surrounding country is finely varied by hill and dale and interspersed with numerous lakes connected by small streams"[22]. Yet that prized location, which was so picturesque by British standards, became a death trap in itself. The site lacked the necessary food, water, proper wind shelter, and fuel that could have been found further down the hill near the lake. When a Scottish born officer, who had not been schooled in the British aesthetics of

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[20] MacLaren, "Aesthetic Map...", 19-20.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] J. MacIlraith, Life of Sir John Richardson. (oxford University Press, 1959) 62.

the sublime and picturesque, suggested to Franklin that the camp be moved closer to the necessities of life, Franklin bellowed back saying he was there to civilise the landscape[23]. After their arduous journey the following year, Franklin and his party returned back to fort Enterprise and they did not have the strength to make their way down to the lake to fish or hunt. Had it not been for the assistance of the Dene in bringing food to Franklin's party, Franklin and his men would have been killed by their own aesthetics.

Thus the aesthetics of the sublime and picturesque became thoroughly engrained on the consciousness of all British travellers as the criteria for viewing scenery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a time where books on exotic travelling and exploration were outsold only by books on theology. Through the use of these conventions in exploration literature, novels, and art and architecture, the British public developed stereotypes of the Arctic that were often wrong, but still believed to be true.

These aesthetics were not restricted to the Arctic. Simon Fraser described his journey down the Fraser River as a sublime experience. He spoke of "towering mountains, too tall to ever climb" and "rapids...situated in the most unpicturesque manner"[24]. Clearly Fraser was expecting a different landscape. Maybe he was expecting to find a calm river that would remind him of his native Scotland. Samuel Taylor Coleridge described in vivid detail the sublime vistas of Antarctica in his epic *The rime of the ancient mariner*, which became a definitive model for writing novels about distant places. British readers were also introduced to the exotic and picturesque visions of India and the sublime landscapes of Egypt and South Africa by the 1750s.

Those who organised expeditions in the 1760s in Britain may have read many of the popular travel accounts of the day, for many of the developments in exploration

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[23] J.Franklin. *Thirty Years in the Arctic Regions* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988) 115-21.
[24]Simon Fraser, *A Journey to the Interior*. (London: John Murray, 1810), 56.

encouraged these ways of viewing unexplored lands. In 1776, the British Parliament decreed that as a condition for discovering the Northwest Passage, searches should be restricted to north of the fifty-second parallel. This meant that the search moved from the relatively safe confines of Hudson's Bay to the vast, uncharted (therefore sublime) waters of the Pacific. The most noted voyage of the time to be restricted to this region was James Cook's 1776-1780 voyage. The posthumous publication of Cook's accounts brought polar exploration to new heights and publicised him the first modern explorer in search of the Northwest Passage. But as J. Beaglehole points out, Cook's popularity stemmed partly from the fact that he died during the voyage and therefore couldn't describe, in his own words, his Arctic experience[25]. Some in Britain even went so far as to suggest that the sublime experience of the Arctic affected Cook's judgement so much that a mental error led to his murder in Hawaii.

Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty at the time of Cook's final voyage, believed Cook's death may have been caused by confusion from being too long in the Arctic. He said Cook isolated himself in a sublime environment with nothing but ice in sight for hundreds of miles, and speculated that this may have caused Cook to go insane because he felt insignificant in comparison to the sheer vastness of the Arctic. He came to this conclusion when in 1780, a midshipman with Cook, George Gilbert, claimed his captain looked unwell and began to have serious arguments with his officers about the directions the ships should pass through the Arctic. Gilbert went on to tell Sandwich that Cook seemed unwell from that point on, and that he engaged in erratic behaviour, including arguing with and assaulting the natives upon his return to Hawaii from the Arctic. Gilbert even suggested that Cook was so "terrified of the Arctic...of its sublime

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[25] J.Beaglehole. *The Life of Captain James Cook*, (London: University of London Press, 1974) x-xxi.

and terrifying state of existence that he acted out of fear of the unknown and the terrible[26]. Recently, this theory of melancholia dementia caused by over exposure to the Arctic cold and isolation has been rejected by naval medical historian Sir James Watt. He concluded that Cook likely contacted a rare form of malaria on his second Pacific voyage that led to meningitis which would surely have killed him from progressive insanity within months of his return to England.

Other travels added to the notion of the sublime because of their failure to elaborate on the mysteries of the unknown. For example Samuel Hearne's voyage to the mouth of the Coppermine River in 1771 and Alexander Mackenzie's journey down the Mackenzie River in 1789 added few points of discovery in a vast unexplored region. Though their travel accounts had been read by the literate few in society, the two explorers were still received with a hesitant scepticism at public lectures in London and Royal Geographical Society meetings for their lack of contribution to the sublime and picturesque. The Royal Geographical Society Paper reported on the lecture,

> The explorers spoke of a land of friendly savages who appeared in no way to be aggressive toward them. This strange land with its strange savages must INDEED be sublime, for even these brave explorer's cannot speak of such terrible realities for fear of frightening all who read their words.[27]

However, as will be pointed out in Chapter Two, Hearne and Mackenzie were the first explorers of the far north who tried to explain just how unexciting the Arctic really was, that the sublime did not necessarily mean it was a frightening place. It was for these reasons that both explorers were met with such scepticism.

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[26] *Ibid.*, 118.
[27] The Royal Geographical Society Paper, January 21, 1791, 1.

By the early nineteenth century the Arctic was beginning to be an exotic backdrop for adventure stories that were closer to fiction than reality. During this time, explorers continued to wander the globe, searching for unmapped places to romanticise, but most of the great mysteries, such as the discovery of the Northwest Passage, remained unsolved. As Europe became entrenched in the Napoleonic wars, exploration more or less lost its importance, and again the blank spaces on the map became unchallenged. But by 1818 the wars were over and Britain became more irresistibly drawn to discover the unknown reaches of the Empire. It was at this time that the popularity of one novel pushed the ideals of the sublime and picturesque again to the forefront and gave rise to a new Arctic myth.

It has been heralded as one of the greatest coincidences of Arctic exploration that 1818 marked not only a return of Britain's search for the Northwest Passage, but also of the appearance of a fantasy novel that used the Arctic as effectively as any ever written. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was a prophetic novel for the time. The changes that the main character, Walton, experienced came to be the same experiences that the Victorians would undergo in the coming decades. Initially, Walton's dream was of a tropical ring of land surrounding the North Pole, and his belief in the sublime power of Mother Nature was heightened by his meeting with Frankenstein. Shelley wrote of this encounter: "The starry sky, the sea, and every sight afforded by these wonderful regions, seems still to have the power of elevating his soul from earth"[28] Walton learned of the vastness of the sublime through Frankenstein's tale, and by the end of the novel, Walton was finally able to realise the terror of his own experience in the Arctic: "I am surrounded by mountains of ice, which admit of no escape, and threaten every moment to crush my ships."[29] Walton

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[28] Mary Shelley, Frankenstein. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) 50.
[29] *Ibid.*

explained that the polar world was hostile, untameable, and unforgiving.

Despite the immense popularity of Frankenstein, it still remains the only novel of significance pertaining to the Arctic published in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is partly because there existed no need for creating stories; since the era focused on exploration, there were plenty of expedition accounts to entertain the imagination.

The driving force behind Britain's exploration of the Arctic was Sir John Barrow, Second Secretary to the British Admiralty from 1799 to 1845. Called the "Father of Arctic Exploration", Barrow viewed water-based exploration as a means of occupying the nineteenth century British Navy, which had become idled after the end of the Napoleonic wars. There was also the possibility of commercial profit in exploration, not to mention a chance for Barrow to be elevated to the illustrious position of First Lord of the Admiralty, a life long dream, but more compelling reasons were for national pride and for scientific advancements. For these reasons, Barrow pressured the Royal Society to get Parliament to amend the 1776 Act, offering prize money for the completion of the Northwest Passage. He convinced the Admiralty that British national honour was at stake in the Arctic. He claimed it would be mortifying to the whole nation if Russia, Germany, Norway, or anyone else for that fact with a weaker navy, were to complete the Northwest Passage before Britain. Parliament agreed, amended the Act of 1776, and gave Barrow permission to assemble an expedition to search for the Northwest Passage.

Barrow's first two sea-based expeditions to the Arctic were in 1818. Sir John Ross commanded the *Isabella* and the *Alexander* in search of the Passage, which David Buchan attempted to reach the pole in the *Trent* and *Dorothea.* Both expeditions failed miserably. Ross barely penetrated Lancaster Sound and refused to go any farther, while Buchan made it as far as the west side of Spitsbergen. Despite their failures, both explorers were featured at sold out lectures at the Royal Society meetings (again arranged by Barrow) to

"discuss their sublime journeys into the harsh unknown"[30]. The audiences could not get enough of these officers and many wealthy landowners gave donations to the Navy to send out new expeditions. Barrow could not have been more pleased.

From 1818 to 1845, Barrow approved and planned a series of overland and maritime expeditions that added many pieces to the puzzle of the Arctic. The new emphasis was on the discovery and safe completion of the Northwest Passage. Everything else from mapping the continental coastline, the collection of biological specimens, and taking magnetic observations was secondary. It was the Northwest Passage that occupied the Admiralty's imagination and that of the explorers, the publishers, the artists, and the public at large. These explorers, who attempted to complete the passage while enduring dreadful ordeals and demonstrating the stiff-upper-lip mentality of British courage, even in such complete failure, were to become national heroes: William Edward Parry, Sir John Franklin, Dr. John Rae, and Sir Robert M'Clure. These men would be the inspiration to those who followed in the late nineteenth century: Horace Greely, Charles Hall, Robert Peary and Frederick Cook.

By the mid nineteenth century, it was only a matter of time before both Britain and the United States were drawn irresistibly toward to opening up of the Arctic and as that time drew nearer, the modern press had a large role to play in the shaping of the new Arctic perceptions and of its explorers.

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[30]John Barrow, A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions. (London: David and Charles Reprints, 1971) 100.

Chapter Two: Master Manipulators: John Murray, John Franklin, and the Birth of British Sensational Exploration Literature.

Before the heyday of the modern press, the best way an explorer could reach his audience was through the publication of his travel journals. In fact, publishing one's account of an expedition not only became popular, it became expected and those who profited were the explorer, the publisher, and John Barrow. Although most who travelled to the Arctic published their accounts, this chapter will look primarily at Franklin's journals and published narratives from both his overland expeditions and how, with the help of publisher John Murray and his ghost writers, Franklin manipulated the presentation of the facts to draw in more readers, therefore, increasing sales and profits.

One of the most popular early nineteenth century travel accounts to describe the Arctic landscape came not from Franklin, but from William Parry. Written in 1821, Parry's *Journal of a voyage for the discovery of a North-West Passage* devoted many pages to the mundane details of ship life and of waiting out the long Arctic winters. But the concept of wintering in the Arctic was a new one, and it thrilled the British public. Though the book seems unromantic today, it was considered a very romantic saga in 1821 London. Even Parry's understatement and logic in describing what must have been unusual for him emphasised the strangeness and vastness of the Arctic landscape. When he explained the dreariness he and his crews endured, he evoked sublimness:

> Not an object was to be seen which an eye could rest with pleasure unless when directed to the spot where the ships lay, and where our little colony was planted. The sound of voices...served now and then to break the silence far different from that peaceable composure which characterizes the landscape of a cultivated country; it was the deathlike stillness of the most dreary desolation and the total absence of animated

existence.[31]

The long winters were only one aspect of this extraordinary world. At times, the Arctic was home to many strange phenomena not seen anywhere else on the globe; mock suns, the Northern Lights, and mirages created by refracting light all added to the mystery and allure of the Arctic. Above all, there was the sheer power of the pack ice that could crush the strongest ships. Even the steam engine, the newest invention of the Industrial Age, was no match for the power of the Arctic pack ice. The knowledge the public received of the Arctic was, therefore, a culmination of fact and fiction dominated by the power of the sublime.

Throughout this era of polar exploration, few explorers made such an impact on the public as did Sir John Franklin, a Royal Naval officer who served with Nelson at Trafalgar and who got his first taste of the Arctic while serving with David Buchan in 1818. After this brief apprenticeship in the Arctic, Franklin went on to command two overland expeditions (1818-1821 and 1825-27) and his ill-fated 1845 expedition by sea. On his first overland expedition, eleven men succumbed to starvation, scurvy, or murder. But Franklin lived to tell about his ordeals and was heralded in Britain as "the man who ate his boots" to survive. He emerged as a romantic hero figure and as a result Oxford University bestowed him with an honorary degree in 1822, and he was knighted the year after.

But it certainly was not Franklin's ability as a writer that gained him prominence. His prose is plodding, difficult to decipher at times, and what can be deciphered is quite formal. Even as he attempts to describe the Arctic landscape in terms of the literary conventions of the time, the picturesque, the result is not very convincing:

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[31] William Parry, *Journal of a voyage for the discovery of a North-west Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific.* (London: John Murray, 1821) 125.

> Steel River presents much beautiful scenery; it winds through a narrow, but well-wooded, valley, which at every turn, discloses to us an agreeable variety of prospect, rendering more picturesque by the effect of the season of the foliage, now ready to drop from the trees and the light yellow fading of the poplars formed a fine contrast to the dark evergreen of the spruce, whilst the willows, of an intermediate hue, served to shade the two principal masses of colour into each other.[32]

But instead, the public delighted in Franklin's account of suffering, murder, and cannibalism, all of which fitted the prevailing taste for gothic and heroic tales. Simultaneously, his books included an unintentional use of the sublime: the very lands that reduced his men to such desperate and life-threatening conditions were powerful, vast, brooding, and terrible images to the reading public back home.

But why was Franklin the most popular Arctic explorer of the first half of the nineteenth century? There were previous tales of death and suffering, but none of them reached the popularity or the notoriety as did Franklin's. There are many answers to this question. Perhaps it was because the nineteenth century British public could see a nobleness to his character that our society no longer can ascribe to our public figures. Perhaps it simply was because that his entire career was on average so disastrous that the very idea he could come back two out of three times from such a terrible place captured the public's imagination. For whatever reason, Franklin laid the groundwork for both his and future Arctic explorers' roles as tragic heroes both in Britain and in America. But to do this, Franklin needed help with his public image, and this is where the Admiralty and London's most powerful publishing house came in to help.

Franklin's two overland narratives have been mined almost to exhaustion by historians for their ethnographic, historic, and geographic content, but the idea that the

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[32] John Franklin, Narrative of an Expedition to the Polar Sea in the Years 1818, 1819, 1820 and 1821 (Edmonton: Hurtig Press, 1971) 34-35.

narrative, particularly the second narrative, was written by a number of different people, is still not well known.

While modern readers question the authority of historical study by pointing to the unavoidable colonising effect of the culture that writes the narratives, nineteenth century readers in Britain viewed the journals very differently. Franklin published his accounts of his experiences soon after he returned to England. On the conclusion of each voyage, he was summoned by Sir John Barrow to the Admiralty offices where he met with Barrow and John Murray, London's foremost publisher of adventure novels and exploration/travel journals. Together, the three would sit down with to discuss Franklin's notes and how to make them into the most important travel account of the year. From the public's point of view the written word was the truth and Franklin's narratives seem to have been accepted as unbiased assessments of his experiences in the Arctic. Never viewed as fictitious, Franklin's journals became as credible as fact. Franklin's idea of interpreting the Arctic landscape in picturesque or sublime terms was virtually non-existent in his personal journal. The idea of landscape perception, therefore, had to be added to the published account to draw the reader's interest. The perception, or lack of it, of landscape which appears in the final 1822 version was not a condition of Franklin's own visual conditioning, but was a conscious effort by Murray to fulfil the expectations of the reader. The second published narrative of 1828 shows a much darker and condemning view of the natives than what appeared in Franklin's own personal narrative. This is uncharacteristic of Franklin, as he had never been known to speak ill of the natives even among his officers. Franklin had even promised the Copper natives that no harm would come to them by his men in appreciation for them having saved his party's lives in 1822 when they were starving on the tundra. There must have been a reason why the two published journals differed so much in content, language, and intended target. It was because there was such overwhelming success with the first journal, and because the events of 1825-1827 seemed

so boring and uneventful in comparison that Franklin may have felt compelled to write his personal journal as if he were going to publish it. Franklin's first published narrative sold over 75,000 copies both in Britain and in the United States, and that was incentive enough for Murray and Barrow to significantly change the look and style of the second narrative.

What then is the difference between a narrative and a journal? To help understand the answer to this, an understanding of Arthur Ponsonby's relation between "diary" and "autobiography" is essential. The autobiography is distinct from the diary in that it is composed with publication in mind whereas the diary is a private venture[33]. Publication can only be considered if there is sufficient reason to assume someone will want to read the account. Ponsonby also states that "letters" are different from diaries because letters have a distinct recipient and the diary does not[34]. Therefore, can Franklin's journal be considered a diary? The answer is no, because in the British Navy, there was no such thing as a diary. Officers were expected to keep journals of their day to day ship activities, scientific experiments and so on, and these journals would be surrendered to the Admiralty once the expedition arrived back in London.

Franklin's overland expeditions' journals had a specific recipient in mind: the Admiralty, and therefore they were considered "letters" more than diaries. All officers on any ship anywhere in the British Navy, even today, are required to keep daily records of activities conducted aboard ship such as navigational data, magnetic calculations, and biological observations. Under no circumstances were these logs to contain personal commentaries, such as discussing family back home, looking forward to port, or especially questioning the orders of senior officers. These issues were to be kept in personal diaries which the Admiralty never saw (or knew existed). As a result of this constraint, the

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[33] Arthur Ponsonby, *English Diaries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1956) 52-4.
[34] *Ibid.*, 60.

alterations in Franklin's narrative from the journals can be attributed to the demands of the readers in Britain. The audience's role in shaping the narratives is indisputable.

Although in reality the expedition of 1825-27 set out to finish what was not completed in the 1819-1822 expedition, the public's reception to both expeditions was anything but similar. The first narrative ran to four editions in Britain in eighteen months. No other travel narrative had ever been published so soon after the expedition's completion. Most writers had to wait ten years for the second printing to be considered. By 1824, there was a French edition of Franklin's book, a German translation, and an American version, and by the end of the decade, the narrative was being published as a companion edition to the second narrative. Yet it was quite a different story in 1828 when the second narrative was released. At first, the book did not sell many copies, and Murray was, to put it mildly, annoyed. Franklin also probably felt as though he should go into hiding for a year until the disappointment died down. There was no second edition until well into the next decade. The popularity of the two narratives can be traced back to content and the public's growing appetite for the new British buzzword: sensationalism.

On the first expedition, Franklin lost nearly half of his party because of unpreparedness, starvation, hypothermia, and scurvy. Midshipman Robert Hood, the party's artist, was murdered by a deranged voyageur, after which surgeon Dr. John Richardson retaliated by shooting the scout after he found him consuming Hood's body. Finally, there was the rescue of Franklin's party by the "savage and wild" natives of the north who brought the party fish because Franklin's men had refused to leave their "picturesque heaven" for a less "cultured" location. The expedition, by Admiralty standards, was bold, considering that military discipline was expected of the Canadian voyageurs. The Admiralty was not sure how the Copper Indians would react, and that the party had to rely on supplies from poorly-stocked trading posts at the height of the rivalry between the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies. There was everything a person

wanted in a popular narrative, and Franklin was rewarded by seeing his first narrative sell an unprecedented amount of copies.

To make sure the second expedition was a better success, the Admiralty took painstaking measures to plan the trip well. Although the merger of the two fur companies was now complete, Barrow did not want to take any chances and sent Franklin out with his own provisions. This time native interpreters were added to make the contact smooth, and Barrow spent two years hand picking those who would go with Franklin. Once picked, these men were thoroughly trained in Arctic survival by Franklin and Richardson. As a consequence, Franklin experienced his most successful expedition to the Arctic. No lives were lost and no incidences of scurvy or starvation were reported. Franklin did not take uncalculated risks; he made sure his men retraced their steps, and they were cautious in their calculations of pack ice movements and shifting. And if these events did not meet with the British ideal of heroism, the results proved that the coastline was too shallow to allow ships of any size to sail easily while fully loaded with goods.

To the British public, the second expedition was boring in detail. It had nothing of the human interest of the first expedition and since Franklin was by then addicted to public adoration, he probably knew before Murray that the narrative would have to be made more interesting. The first expedition had told a gripping tale. Franklin met disaster at Fort Enterprise in 1821. He had to remain in Rupert's land to recuperate, but by then newspapers in Britain had printed the sordid details of murder, cannibalism, loyalty, and determination. Franklin's arrival was announced in the *Times* and about 2000 well wishers came to greet the biggest national hero since Nelson[35]. Franklin was wined and dined by royalty, the Prime Minister, the clergy, university presidents, and important people in society. He admitted to his future wife, Jane Griffin, that he finally found the recognition

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[35] *Times*, October 9, 1882, 3.

in life that was never given to him in childhood: "I am having the time of my life!"[36] Despite the accolades, months went by before the public saw the published narrative.

John Murray was very eager to publish Franklin's first narrative, so much so that he was there at the end of this expedition to greet Franklin on his return to England. Though there was no commitment made there, Franklin said he would contact Murray if Barrow permitted the meeting[37]. John Barrow not only approved but he summoned Murray to Admiralty Headquarters where he told Murray that Franklin's narrative was a masterpiece waiting to happen[38]. Murray obviously agreed, as the first edition sold for ten guineas a copy, which was equal to one month's salary that Franklin would earn as Governor of Van Diemen's Land in the next decade.

A closer look at sales figures from the first narrative shows that the books became more popular than Murray had originally projected. Franklin got five hundred guineas plus a fifteen- percent share on profit sales for a total of about eight hundred guineas. The first edition of *A Journey to the Polar Sea* was published as a single volume in four parts which appeared in June of 1823. The second edition came out in September of 1823 and again Franklin collected his share of the profits. The second edition found its way into grammar schools where boys fantasized that they would grow up to be like Franklin. More homes now had a copy of this first narrative and the *Times* began to see the value in plugging explorers by urging its readers to believe that supporting Franklin was supporting the Empire's taming of the wilderness[39]. Since price setting laws didn't apply to the book trade until 1845, book sellers and collectors boosted the price of the second edition to urge people to grab their copy before the edition sold out.

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[36] Franklin to Jane Griffin, December 10, 1822. SPRI MS 2290.
[37] Franklin to John Richardson, October 30, 1822, SPRI MS 288/5.
[38] Barrow to Murray, November 4, 1822. John Murray Archives, London JMM 1138/2.
[39] *Times*, September 23, 1823, 4.

A second edition to the first narrative was ready for release only four months after the first edition but oddly enough, Franklin did not know this was to happen. Murray probably already intended then to release the second edition on the heels of the first. Negotiations between Franklin and Murray did not state that a second edition was planned, but Franklin was plotting behind the scenes with Richardson for a possible second edition by July of 1823. Here, they spoke of changing Richardson's account of shooting the voyageur who had murdered and cannibalised Hood[40]. This was discussed in order to take away any glimmer of guilt from Richardson and in the end from Franklin as well, who could have been accused of not keeping his officers under control. Perhaps Murray thought the same thing when he decided a second edition should come out quickly. He probably wanted to stop any grumbling from the public concerning improprieties. Murray then ordered the type to be reset for the second edition to meet the demands of the market that he so poorly underestimated. Franklin became a best selling author.

In 1824 Murray published the third and fourth editions. Although Murray had to take on the expense of the new editions, they were cheaper, so more people could buy the narrative. Franklin had suggested that the fourth edition contain more of Robert Hood's art work, but Barrow refused, arguing that owners of the previous editions would feel cheated that they did not have the same art work.

Though it is not all together clear how much money Franklin finally made from the first narrative, he was receiving substantial rewards for his efforts. Murray presented the same offer of five hundred guineas to William Edward Parry in 1819 for the publishing rights to his Arctic narrative. But Parry did profit more than Franklin on his second edition. Parry got another five hundred guineas, where Franklin is reported only to have

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[40] McIlraith, *Life of Sir John Richardson*, 114.

received 170 guineas. But Franklin came out on top for he had two more editions plus foreign editions. All estimates put Franklin's earnings at nearly 1500 guineas, an amount equal to three year's salary as Governor. Franklin, without a doubt, was hoping he could repeat the success in his next expedition's narrative.

However, the less than sensational outcome of the second expedition and the far less enthusiastic response by the Admiralty and the Murray publishing house, forced Franklin to change his strategy. He began to think more consciously about creating an account of the journey that would be interesting. In a sense, he had to make something out of nothing. In 1823 all he had to do was satisfy the public's eagerness to read about the highly published controversial events. In 1828 he was required to take the mechanical, formal tone off what had happened. Since Franklin broke publishing records with the 1823 edition, it became a tough act to follow, and, unfortunately, what he had accomplished with the second expedition would not sell anywhere near the numbers of the first edition.

The idea of adding details to a carefully composed narrative was not a new idea in Franklin's day. In fact, many explorers had been guilty of playing with reality. Alexander Mackenzie's account of his voyage down the Mackenzie river was actually not his own. The narrative had been written by a very clever, and very invisible, ghost writer/editor, William Combe. Mackenzie had no interest in publishing until a friend introduced him to Combe, a professional writer by trade and avid reader of travel literature. Finally, in 1801, Mackenzie's narrative, *Voyages From Montreal*, was published ten years after the initial voyage. Mackenzie's notes were sketchy at best so when he and Combe discussed writing the narrative in 1799, Mackenzie could not quite remember the full details of the events. Cut from the same cloth was Samuel Hearne's *Journey to the Northern Ocean*, a book which was not published until twenty years after the voyage. David Thompson spent five years writing a narrative of his journey down the river that now bears his name, but unfortunately, he died before its completion. This is just a small collection of explorers

who understood the possibilities of manipulation in writing, even if they were truly more interested in geographical knowledge and learning.

But Franklin's journey in 1819-1822 was different. He had failed yet he lived to tell about it, and Murray was eager for Franklin to get the first narrative out before time elapsed, not because he worried about Franklin's memory, but about a decline in public interest. To Murray, public interest was money in his pocket and he did not want to lose out. The Admiralty offices as well, looking for an excuse to prove they were still valuable, urged Franklin to start writing immediately. Thus, instead of waiting for what seemed to be the customary ten or twenty years, Franklin and Richardson started to work on the human interest story of the disaster.

At the close of the 1825-1827 expedition, Franklin had to weigh more carefully the concerns of the audience and rhetoric because the events themselves had little appeal. Still, Franklin was relatively quick in getting out the second narrative as compared to Hearne and Thompson, for he was aware that his telling of the events, rather than the events themselves, offered the only hope for public acceptance. He seems to have used his time in 1828-1829 to write his narrative as a conscious writer rather than relying on his journal of facts, figures, charts, and diagrams for the Admiralty.

But a literary writer Franklin was not, and the thought made him uncomfortable. In 1828, he again begged for Richardson's assistance in writing the second narrative. He and Franklin had spent long hours in 1822-1823 going over diction, spelling, and grammar. Richardson accepted, but had to pull out when he was transferred for a brief period to the Great Lakes as a relief surgeon and he would be away for Franklin's deadline. In a letter to his sister Franklin wrote

> The prospect of becoming an author is by no means gratifying to me, indeed nothing but a sense of duty

> would prompt me to undertake the task. My objection
> partly arises from a consciousness of my inability to equal
> the stile [sic] and language of most of the Modern travellers.
> I am afraid I cant [sic] do this without Richardson's help.[41]

This clearly shows that Franklin was very insecure about his difficulties in writing. He equated good writing with sensibility of style and proper language and it seems he would rather have been known as a travel writer. So Murray, knowing there was a problem that needed to be rectified, sent in help, a ghost writer named Thomas Briddle to help Franklin flesh out an interesting, and sellable, second narrative.

Briddle was a Cambridge educated literary critic whose scholarly interests lay mainly with fantasy writing for boys. Murray hired him in 1823 to head the children's literature division of the publishing house[42]. Briddle also had a knack for teaching individuals with learning disabilities, and though he was not specifically assigned to Franklin, he consulted the explorer on a weekly basis on content, style, and language. Though there is no existing correspondence between Briddle and Franklin, Franklin seems to have benefited from Briddle's influence as the second narrative, thought not as exciting as the first, is well written.

When Franklin wrote his journal from 1825-1827, his language is much different than in the first, almost as if he were anticipating that the public, not the Admiralty, would read it upon his return. For example, in several places through the journal, he says "The Reader will observe", "The reader will be interested", "The reader is invited to contemplate". As the Admiralty did not read the journals for the pure pleasure of doing so, Franklin had his intended audience in mind. And when his journal indulges in an anecdote

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[41] Franklin to Elizabeth Sellwood, October 10, 1828, SPRI MS 210.

[42] *Employee Lists Book*, John Murray Archives, JMM 2551/22, 56. Reports show Briddle was hired six months after Murray published Franklin's first edition of the first narrative.

complete with "I said-they said" dialogue, about a Yankee steamship passenger's inquisitive mind, Franklin again had the British people, not the Admiralty in mind.

Franklin took all the mundane, Admiralty required information such as topographical charts, explanations of the wildlife and botanical specimens, and sea depth explorations and turned them, thanks in part to Thomas Briddle, into picturesque landscapes designed for a Burkian audience. In other passages, he described the scientific tools the expedition used as devices to measure sublime reality and picturesque beauty. In order for Franklin to become an author and not just a geographer in a wild, strange place, he himself must change mentally, or as it were, keep up with the times. Unable to rely only on actual events, he must become a picturesque hunter for the public back home who need him to keep the myth of the Arctic alive. And keeping in tune with an author, for the second narrative to be on par with the first he must create a protagonist. He was no longer able to depend on the hostile land that served as the protagonist in the first narrative. So Franklin created a new protagonist: the natives. They were portrayed as saviours in the first narrative, and as heathen, blood-thirsty savages in the second. As the created landscapes catered to the typical travel literature audience, the created images of the natives stirred feelings of harrowingly bold adventure in others, particularly young boys.

Exploration literature is as fictional as the popular mystery novels of the day, such as *Frankenstein*. Both manipulate material to entice the audience into believing what they read is true, and for what means? For Franklin it was fame and recognition, for Murray, it meant a big house in the High Street. A close examination of the journals and the narratives shows two very different works, particularly in regards to the second expedition. We can only speculate what the narrative's popularity from the third and final expedition would have looked like had he survived, but it likely would have been quite a narrative for the time.

By the time the second expedition's narrative was going to its second printing, a new medium was beginning to take shape both in Britain and the United States. It was the beginning of the popular press, which now meant that a growing number of people could follow their heroes in the broadsheet pages rather than the expanded, and often expensive for most, pages of a travel narrative. The world was also about to enter its most intense concentration ever on Arctic exploration and the popular press was there to chronicle it.

Chapter Three: The Search for Franklin and the Popular Press.

The English language popular press was actually born in the United States and made its way to Britain several decades later. The reason for this is that America had all the prerequisites for the creation of a mass reading public: high literacy rates, leisure time, and disposable income to purchase newspapers.[43] The second most important reason is the equipment discovered and used in America to produce and distribute large quantities of newspapers. Before the 1830s, the printing press had changed very little since its creation in the 1450s. But thanks to the recent developments of the Industrial Revolution, American press investor Fredrich Koenig patented the world's first steam driven press in 1811 that enabled printers to print both side of the paper simultaneously, enabling them to print twice as many papers in the same amount of time. In 1814, the *New York Times* was the first to use Koenig's invention which could print 1200 sheets an hour.[44] By 1825, improvements allowed the printers to print 3000 sheets and hour and by 1880 that number was increased to 10,000 per hour.[45]

The effect of technological developments on the efficiency of newspaper production was not confined to printing. Distribution and news gathering techniques also improved dramatically throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. By the 1840s railways in Britain ensured that papers could be printed overnight in London and delivered by late afternoon to cities such as Bristol and Birmingham[46]. By the 1870s, that time was cut down to a guarantee of a nine o'clock delivery in those same regions. In the 1840s, the *New York Herald* established a regular system of paper carriers so that subscribers in Albany and Philadelphia could read their papers at breakfast[47]. But the most important

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[43] Richard Atlick. *The English Common Reader.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) 28.
[44] Edward Howe, Newspaper *Publishing in the Nineteenth Century.* (London: Howe Press, 1943) 23.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*, 36.
[47] A.M. Lee. *The Daily Newspaper in America.* (New York: Octagon Press, 1973) 67.

step in the rapid transmission of news was the invention of the telegraph. On May 21, 1844, when Samuel Morse was sending his first telegraphic message, he also sent along the results of a vote in the American House of Representatives to the *Baltimore Gazette*, although he sent the wrong results[48]. In 1845, the first telegraph sent to a British newspaper was sent from Portsmouth to the *London Chronicle*. Newspapers all over America and Britain were quick to use the new wire service to disseminate information as quickly as possible. As newspapers began to reach a growing readership as the nineteenth century progressed, so too grew a new way of reporting about the world. It was called sensationalism. This new trend started in America in the 1830s and would make its way to Britain just in time to cover the tragedy of the 1845 Franklin expedition.

In 1833, American journalist and businessman, Benjamin Day first published his four page newspaper the *New York Sun*. Up until Day's arrival on the newspaper scene, American dailies primarily served as political platforms for individuals while attracting a smaller few into the world of business and international trade. The rest of the spaces were filled with mundane clippings lifted from other papers, few of which would meet the standards of the day for integrity or popular human interest. Day revolutionised news by first lowering the cost of his paper to one cent per copy (the lowest in America at the time) and added to the standard newspaper distribution by means of trains and boys on bikes, Day hired seasonal labourers to sell his papers in Times Square by yelling out the paper's daily headlines to entice passers-by. Day had by then realised that the key to popular journalism lay in appealing to the emotions of the masses rather than to their intellects. Thus, he filled his papers with interesting but trivial local news, feature stories usually about animals or children to attract more female readers, and humorous stories that were meaningful in the texture of human life. Day was an avid reader of Gilpin,

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[48] *Ibid.*, 90.

Uvedale Price and of many explorers like Buchan and Parry, and was enthralled with Burke's theory that the sublime evoked terror and fear. To sell more papers, Day applied this ideology of terror and fear to his reporting style by covering murder, suicides, and duels while deliberately neglecting to cover political and economic news as the years went on[49]. Perhaps one of Day's earliest examples of the terror of the sublime in reporting came in 1835 when the *Sun* ran a series of articles and drawings describing the apparent lunar discoveries of British astronomer John Herschel, including reports of strange amphibious, man-bat creatures that inhabited the moon:

> ...alas Man's hope of flying and travelling to the Moon will be dashed with the latest discovery... a source says these horrifying creatures look like the average man, but possess strange and wonderful wings and long fangs that can penetrate the flesh of any Earthly being... no one will be able to look at the Moon again and think it a peaceful place...[50].

The *Sun*'s circulation rocketed that third week of September, and even after the series had been unveiled as a hoax story, the paper retained that increase of readership. The results of the innovation of sublime reporting brought the paper's circulation from just over 1000 readers in 1833 to just under 15,000 in just two years.[51] However, as time went on, Day would have competition as others realised the power of sensationalism on the imaginations of readers as well as the high earning potential of a wide readership.

By 1840, there were four new newspapers in New York that catered to the growing need for news that terrified, but only one would actually out-do the *Sun*. This was the *New York Herald*, started by James Gordon Bennett in 1836. He was far more sensational than Day, and as time would tell, he had a huge passion for the Arctic regions.

When Bennett started out, his style was very similar to Day's, but he soon

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[49] Francis O'Brien. *The Story of the Sun, New York, 1833-1918* (New York: D.Appleton and Co, 1918) 75.
[50] The *Sun*, New York. September 19, 1835, 1.
[51] *Ibid.*,78.

expanded his region of reporting to other more remote parts of the world. Bennett too, was an avid reader of all the major books and theories of the sublime of the day; Kant, Burke, Gilpin, all influenced his editorial style. He read as many explorers journals as he could whether they were from Africa, the Arctic, or the Amazon and based on these books, he developed an editorial style that heightened the terror of the sublime in all his writings. He also appealed to the business people in New York by developing the city's most comprehensive business section[52]. He devoted space to New York's high society, religious leaders, sports figures, none of whom had been prominently featured in any daily anywhere before. He also was the creator of the headline and the sub-headline. And Bennett did not hold back when it came to reporting the terrifying sublime news of the day. Typical headlines and second headline read: "PAYNE'S BRUTALITY:--Battering a Fellow Workman to Death to Please His Wife", "HER LIFE BLOOD FLOWING: A Woman Afflicted With Melancholia Opens Her Veins in a Bathroom", "BABY TODD MURDERED BY MOTHER: A Penniless Young Mother Throws Her Baby From the Tenth Story Window" or "IN FLAMES: Massacre of Europeans by the Alexandrians".[53] By 1827, the *Herald* had out-shone the *Sun* with its reports of crime, seduction, and scandal. "I have seen depravity to the core," wrote Bennett in his paper, "I proclaim each morning the deep guilt that enshrouds our society."[54] Bennett was the first newspaper editor in America to coin the phrase "sensationalism" using it to refer to the terror of the sublime in reporting as Day had. He had studied the cold, calculated British press and wanted to be more sensational like Day. Bennett was calculating that "society was more willing to sit down and read six pages worth of testimony from a murder or divorce trial

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[52] *The Wall Street Journal* used Bennett's paper as their model to reach business people world wide.
[53] The *Herald*, June 10, 1837. February 23, 1838. May 6 1838. September 5 1838. All front page stories.
[54] *Ibid.*, August 19, 1837.

then they were to read the work of genius by one of the world's foremost writers".[55] And he was right. The divorce trials of several New York City socialites were eagerly anticipated with headlines like: "MRS. FERGUSON THREATENS TO HANG HERSELF! She Demands Fifty Per-cent of the Estate and Will Commit Suicide if Demands Not Met." and "COLONEL SHANTON'S MISTRESS TELLS ALL. How the Esteemed Officer Attacked His Wife in Boston."[56] Again, Bennett's sales increased and he knew he had a winning writing style. Such reports were terrifying to most people; it was terrible and tragic to think society was this corrupt and cruel.

By 1840, Herald-style sensationalism was found in newspapers all over America, but on the other side of the Atlantic, this new form of sensationalising the sublime was frowned upon as being immoral and a false means of reporting news. British papers still overflowed with dullness and images of the sublime and picturesque particularly in its reporting of exploration. One reason why this was the case was the existence in Britain of taxes on knowledge, that meant the newspapers could not be distributed to everyone. This meant that, according to the Stamp Act of 1819, a periodical which contained news was subject to a heavy tax. So this meant that papers in Britain in the 1820s and 1830s cost three shillings. Thus, only the privileged few could afford to buy newspaper subscriptions.[57] Those able to purchase the papers were businessmen, politicians, or the gentry wanting to keep up with their peers. But, by 1842, this was all to change as the tax on newspapers and periodicals was lowered to allow all British papers to cost no more than three pence a paper. Though their circulations were smaller than in America, British newspapers like the *London Times* and *Daily Mirror* had circulations of 28,000 in 1845,

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[55] *Ibid.*

[56] *Ibid.*, July 1838.

[57] Newspapers in Britain at this time could not be purchased on a day-to-day basis. A minimum of a one year's subscription was required.

while the powerhouse papers became the *London Illustrated News*, *The News of the World*, and *Lloyd's Weekly* with over 100,000 in circulation a year. For the first time since the reign of Queen Anne, the British press was free of fiscal constraints, and this allowed for more freedom of the press which opened the door for sensationalism to take root in order to appeal to all and increase sales.

Despite the use of the terror of the sublime in America and Britain, the press still had not truly discovered exploration as a topic for suitable sensationalist reporting and would not until about 1847. Still the dominant views of these uncharted lands were the sublime and the picturesque, it would have to take the death of these two ideologies before the sensationalism of exploration could firmly take hold, and that opportunity came with the much anticipated launch of the 1845 Franklin expedition.

Franklin set sail from London for the Northwest Passage on May 18, 1845 under much hype and media spectacle. Again, John Barrow had a hand in orchestrating this media coverage, for he had personally gone to visit the editors of the *London Illustrated News* and the *London Times* to inform them of the impeding voyage. The London Illustrated News on May 11 1845 stated,

> Franklin prepares to accomplish what no one else has been able to thus far...the sailing of the North-West Passage. At last the sublime terrain of the Arctic will be conquered by the Gallant and Fearless Franklin.[58]

Franklin's expedition was the largest and most well equipped expedition ever mounted by the Admiralty, and Barrow was so optimistic that Franklin would come back that no contingency plan was implemented in case he did not. Franklin's party consisted of 129

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[58] *London Illustrated News*, May 11, 1845, 2.

men and two ships that were the first to be outfitted with a metal plated hull and steam powered screws to cut through the Arctic pack ice. Even the latest in canned food technology was taken and only the top officers currently serving in the British Navy were chosen for this mission. Joseph Conrad would later describe these Arctic explorers the "most dominating figures among all seamen explorers of the first half of the nineteenth century."[59] Arctic experts, the people, and more importantly, the press were equally optimistic about the outcome of the voyage that the *London Illustrated News* reported on its front page: "The evident design of Providence in placing difficulties before man is, to sharpen his faculties for their mastery...and an expedition is at present on foot which will probably complete the outline of the American continent toward the Pole."[60].

Not only was there a considerable material investment in the Franklin expedition, there was also the emotional investment. The expedition was merely about national pride, but it represented the explorer's heroic capacity to tame nature. The crews were viewed in the British press as heroic idols willing to give their lives for their discoveries and "whose aims were certainly as pure as the air of those high latitudes where not a few had previously laid down their lives for the advancement of geography."[61]

Franklin's final voyage, however, took place during one of the coldest winters on written record and this, together with the things that the expedition was not prepared for, resulted in a disaster that had not been seen before or since in the history of Arctic exploration. The realisation that Franklin may have failed came very slowly to the British over the next several years. It was not until November of 1847 that Sir James Clark Ross casually walked into Admiralty House in London and enquired about when he may see Franklin back in London. Until then, Franklin was little more than a thought in people's

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[59] Joseph Conrad. *Last Essays* (London: J.M.Dent and Sons, 1926) 82.
[60] *London Illustrated News*, May 20, 1845, 1.
[61] *London Times*, May 20, 1845, 1.

minds. Only in the spring of the following year did serious questions begin to be asked about Franklin's whereabouts (again raised by Ross). Now, it began to sink into the public that Franklin, his men, and his two ships may have disappeared in the frozen lands of the Canadian Arctic. Newspapers in Britain and America displayed headlines that evoked fear that Franklin had lost his 20 year battle to conquer the Arctic. Headlines claimed "FRANKLIN FEARED DEAD: The Sublime Takes another Hero."[62] Bennett, who was becoming increasingly fascinated with the Arctic as he followed the Franklin saga, delved deeper into the fears society held about this unknown place: "ARCTIC HORRORS. THE TERRIFYING TRUTH?: The Suspected Deaths of 129 British Explorers. They Were the Best in Britain, but Even They Could Not Cheat Death."[63] Bennett recorded increased sales that year as he chronicled the Franklin story and his stories were to get more sensational and frightening as time went on and as new information about the expedition came to light.

That same year, Franklin's friends and colleagues mounted three search efforts to find him: one by sea from Lancaster Sound led by Ross, a westerly approach by sea at the Bering Strait by Sir Thomas Moore, and overland down the Mackenzie River led by Sir John Richardson. Dr. John Rae also searched the Mackenzie area separately from Richardson. Despite the fears of what these officers might find, the public appeared calm, optimistic, and upbeat. As the *Times* reported: "We do not feel any unnecessary anxiety as to the fate of these two ships...We place great hope in the *materiel* as well as the *personnel* of the expedition, for ships better adapted to the service, better equipped in all respects, or better officered and manned, never left the shores of England."[64]

Still the searchers for Franklin could not break away from their previously held

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[62] London *Times,* April 18, 1847, 1.
[63] The *Herald,* May 16, 1847, 1.
[64] *Ibid.,* March 16, 1848, 1. Emphasis the *Times.*

visions of the north and continued to view the region much as they had in decades past. Richardson reported to the *London Illustrated News* before he left England in search of his friend: "Here only, of all the countries I have seen, can I understand the deep blue shades of the Italian masters...The depth of shade which marks out low snowy waves of the lake when the sun is low would surprise a painter."[65]

Although Richard clearly could not tear himself away from viewing the world, particularly the Arctic, with a picturesque eye, most British newspapers of the time were moving away from this point of view and focusing more on the heroic qualities of the explorers in terrible and sublime locations:

> The return of Sir James Clark Ross from his voyage in search of Sir John Franklin recalls our attention from the ordinary topics of discussion to those distant and desolate regions of eternal ice from which man and his interests seem for ever banished. That where there is danger men should be found to brave and conquer it, is not a matter of surprise. There will always be forthcoming adventurous spirits...ready to grapple with peril for peril's sake...To men of such stern, unyielding stuff, the human race has been greatly indebted.[66]

It was not only description that the British papers avoided, but lively portrayals in general. They were much like Franklin's journals: long, tedious, and lacking excitement. For example, on October 1, 1850, the *London Times* ran 78 columns on the dispatches of Ross, Richardson, Moore, Rae, and ran 94 columns devoted just to French explorer Joseph-René Bellot, who volunteered his time and resources to search for Franklin, but who himself was tragically killed in the pack ice later that year. Oddly enough, many of these newspaper columns were not written by journalists but by the searchers themselves

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[65] *London Illustrated News*, March 19, 1848, 2.
[66] *London Weekly Times*, November 25, 1849, 1.

and submitted when and where they could. The majority of these articles fell into six defining categories, none of which made for enticing or interesting reading. They were the official searchers' accounts that were often not edited at the paper but printed word for word; pre-expedition sailing records released by the Admiralty to the editors of the London papers; letters received from expedition members; reports of lectures that were taking place in London that focused on the Arctic landscape and possible theories into where Franklin might be; letters to the editor, and editorials. In these respects, British newspapers, particularly the *Times*, the *London Illustrated News*, and the *Morning Herald* gave much more coverage to the Franklin search than they had to all previous Northwest Passage expeditions combined.

Similarly, all newspapers American newspapers also picked up on the Franklin saga after the first American Franklin search party, sponsored by Henry Grinnell, left New York in 1850. It is with this introduction of Franklin into the American press that a distinct difference in reporting styles between both sides of the Atlantic can be seen.

Stories about Franklin in American newspapers in the 1850s tended to be written more sensationally than those in British newspapers. For example, when the Grinnell sponsored ship Advance returned to New York in 1851, the *New York Herald* printed an article that discussed how the crews interacted with the Inuit, the relics they brought home, and the methods used of measuring height and distance when trapped in the pack ice. Though these stories tended to explain how the weather was terribly cold, that the Inuit were untrusting of their southern guests, and that the possibility of finding Franklin alive was very bleak, they were far more reader friendly articles than those that were popping up in the mainstream British press:

> The majority of the crews, as if relieved from a heavy responsibility, and it seemed by common consent, a sympathetic, upheaving, sickening consent

> rushed almost to man for the bulwarks of the vessel, and then there gave full flow to their 'pent-up' feelings without a murmur or reproach from anyone...It is certain that in this waste, Franklin is dead.[67]

For seven more years, expeditions by the dozen sailed all through the Canadian Arctic in search of Franklin and returned with only pieces of Navy Broadcloth, buttons, and spoiled tin cans. These desolate rays of fading hope captivated the press and in turn the public. Franklin was lionised and hero worshipped as a man who clearly, it had to be assumed, had become a martyr for his country and for the advancement of science. His gift, as Campbell suggests the hero gives back, was the vast exploration of an area that was once regarded as desolate and unforgiving. Even popular writers of the day began to lament Franklin as a hero in the name of God, country, and science. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* was set in the polar regions and David Thoreau Walden is filled with references to the Franklin search, arguing that all exploration other than the exploration of one's soul, was futile and wasteful of life:

> Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Is Franklin the only man who is truly lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he is himself? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clark and the Frobisher of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitudes.[68]

In Britain, the popular author who did more for maintaining the public's fascination with the Arctic and Franklin was Charles Dickens, who helped to keep the frenzied interest in Franklin alive well after Franklin was confirmed dead. Dickens did not write about the Arctic, but his magazine *Household Words* served as a forum to discuss Arctic exploration in general and of the mystique surrounding Franklin. *Household Words*, though a magazine, was printed and designed like a London daily. It had a readership of

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[67] *New York Daily Times* October 3, 1851, 2.
[68] David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Penquin Classics, 1969) 119.

125,000 in 1855 and was the only popular forum for sensationalist writings in Britain that probed the lives of beggars, prostitutes, cannibals in Africa, and salacious politicians. And Dickens did his best to maintain the Arctic sublime that was beginning to diminish in the press on both sides of the Atlantic.

> Think of Christmas in the tremendous wastes of snow and ice, that lie in the remotest regions of the earth! Yet it has been kept in those awful solitudes, cheerfully, by Englishmen. Where crashing mountains of ice, heaped up together, have made a chaos round their ship, which in a moment might have stiffened upon the bodies of men lying asleep, closely housed by huge fires, and plasters have turned to ice upon the wounds of others accidentally hurt; where the ships have been indistinguishable from the environing ice, and have resembled themselves far less than the surrounding masses have resembled monstrous piles of architecture which could not possible be there or anywhere...[69].

Dickens' image of the Arctic sublime only continued as long as the Admiralty was willing to maintain a search for Franklin and as prize money for finding a safe route through the Northwest Passage continued to go unclaimed. However, that was to change when in 1853, Robert McClure proclaimed that he was the first to safely navigate through the Passage. Not only was Franklin missing and presumed dead, but one of exploration's most alluring goals had been reached. McClure's completion of the Northwest Passage inspired probably the last classic images of the Arctic sublime in the *London Illustrated News*:

> The ice was floating in broken detached masses, with frosted summits, beautifully brilliant beneath a bright sun and azure sky, assuming the most extraordinary and grotesque appearances-from ships under full sail to whole squadrons of gun-boats, spires of churches...towers, domes, and

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[69] Charles Dickens. *Household Words*. December 20, 1851. 10.

pinnacles, which lent a strange charm to these lonely regions[70].

Three months later the Admiralty announced that if nothing concrete was heard from any other the search parties about the fate of Franklin and his crews by March 31, the Admiralty would officially declare all members of the expedition lost. Despite Lady Jane Franklin's relentless pursuit of knowledge of her husband's fate, the Admiralty had lost interest in continuing with the search. Now that the Northwest Passage had been completed, the Admiralty began to lose interest in the Arctic altogether. Any hopes for another Admiralty-funded search expedition was quickly discarded as war in the Crimea broke out March 27, 1853.

But as fate would have it, as soon as the Admiralty turned their backs on the Arctic, the first definite evidence of the fate of Franklin surfaced. In the fall of that year, Dr. John Rae, perhaps the most successful Arctic explorer of all time, reported to the Admiralty what had happened to Franklin, thus ending the period of the Arctic sublime and opening the way for British sensationalist reporting to take root in the Arctic and planting the seeds for the Admiralty's return to the Arctic in the next few decades.

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[70] *London Illustrated News*, October 22, 1853, 2.

Chapter Four: The Fate of Franklin: The Death of the Sublime and the Rise of Sensationalism in the Modern Press, 1855-1870.

The years between 1855 and 1870 are significant to the study of how the popular press in America and Britain changed its ways of viewing the world and how the newly defined roles of heroes fit into that new world image. The American public's way of perceiving unexplored lands through the conventions of the sublime and picturesque were no longer consistent with the horrible realities exposed by the discovery of the fate of Franklin. The sublime was replaced with a new vision based on man's continuing struggle against nature, and the British public was now beginning to adopt this view as well. The stories that were being brought back from the Arctic in the early stages of the search for Franklin demonstrated the completion of the transition from the terror of the sublime to the sensational in the presentation of the Arctic. This transition was subtle because it did not involve a major adjustment of the cognitive element in the physical image of the north; rather it influenced the affective element, that is, the interpretation of that physical change. In other words, the Arctic did not change, but how explorers envisioned the Arctic changed because they had abandoned the convention of the sublime to view nature. Although the wording of many explorers' accounts of the Arctic in the 1860s was not significantly different than the accounts written in the 1820s, the underlying image was different; whereas the Arctic was mysterious, frightening and sublime before, it was now a region of excitement, tension, and wonderment--a place to be understood for its own sake.

In fact, the face of exploration was changing all around the world. Explorers were not so much interested in conquering the sublime landscape but were becoming genuinely interested in the scientific and cultural benefits of exploration. Many adventurers were interested in new lands for their own sake, particularly in the far north. Travellers to these areas came away with fresh interpretations and exciting images, and together with changes

in the American and British press, set the stage for the subsequent sensationalising of exploration into the later half of the ninetieth century. But sensationalism was about to take off with an accusation that turned the reading public in Britain and America upside-down with disbelief.

Since 1848, when the first concerns arose about the fate of Franklin, the public in America and Britain were fascinated with the newspaper details of the various search parties. On October 23 1854, the *London Times* published a report that Rae had sent to the Admiralty back in July of that same year. The British public finally had an answer to what happened to Franklin, but it was not a pleasant truth that Rae was bringing forth. Rae began by stating that while he was on Boothia Peninsula, he encountered a group of Inuit who, he claimed, gave him sufficient evidence that several bodies of European men were found on King William Island. Rae made his way to King William Island to search and concluded that these were Franklin's men and that they had died here of scurvy and starvation as they were likely trying to make their way to Back's Great Fish River in an attempt to sail down to the nearest fur trading fort. This conclusion was bad enough for a public who believed that Britain's best naval officers were incapable of failure, but what Rae said next sent shockwaves through British society and reverberated strongly in America:

> Some of the bodies had been buried (probably those of the first victims of the famine); some were in a tent or tents. others under the boat, which had been turned over to for a shelter; and several lay scattered about in different directions...From the mutilated state of many of the corpses and the contents of the kettles, it is evident that our wretched countrymen had been driven to the last resource--cannibalism--as a means of prolonging existence...[71].

There was an immediate outcry in Britain of horror, disbelief and scepticism that

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[71] *London Times*. October 23, 1854, 1.

cannibalism really could have occurred on Franklin's expedition. Many newspaper editors accused Rae of fabricating the story in order to collect the 10,000 pound reward for discovering Franklin's fate, while other's discounted the cannibalism story and instead believed that the Inuit had killed Franklin and his crews.[72] Rae was attacked in editorials, especially when he said he believed the Inuit testimony. It didn't take long even for Charles Dickens to break his silence. He put Rae on trial in *Household Words* by claiming to voice the opinions of his nation: "It is in the highest degree improbable that such men as these officers and crews of the two lost ships would, or could, in any extremity of hunger alleviate the pains of starvation by this horrible means."[73]. Although Rae wrote to *Household Word*s to stand by his claims, Dickens continued to argue that the pride of Britain would never consider stooping to the level Rae suggested could be possible in dire circumstances. Even as Rae published his full account of what happened in the magazine over two issues from December to January 1854-55, Dickens came back in his editorial section to suggest caution to his readers that "there are no ample or satisfactory means of discerning the truth."[74] To further his point on cannibalism, Dickens teamed up with another well known English author of the time, Wilkie Collins, to write a play based on what they thought would happen to a group of British naval officers if caught in the same dilemma. The play was called the Frozen Deep, and it became one of the most popular plays of its time by drawing in crowds of 25,000 in its opening week in September 1855.[75]

Despite Dickens' very public disapproval of Rae's claims, the British press tended to take a more subdued approach. After a brief burst of negative press, the British newspapers quickly turned their attentions back to the continuing Crimean War. The

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[72] London *Times*, October 26, 1854, 1.
[73] Charles Dickens. *Household Words*. November 15, 1854a, 361.
[74] *Ibid.*, January 8, 1855a, 221.
[75] London *Times*, September 14, 1855, 8.

Times reported "Our work amid the snow and ice is now limited to the certain investigations which may throw light upon the matter in which our heroic FRANKLIN and his crew came to their end."[76] The press felt the topic was just too controversial to discuss, but their own admission as to what they were willing to report about Franklin meant they too were publicly condemning Rae's report.

Rae's problems didn't stop with the press's treatment of him. His own peers refused to acknowledge him let alone speak to him, and he was barred from attending the Royal Geographical Society's annual general meeting in 1855 for fear that he would bring up the Franklin debate.[77] Rae was ignored and became the earliest example of an explorer who was not elevated to the status of hero because he presented facts which the establishment, the press, and the public refused to believed of its most esteemed British navy. Unlike many other explorers of the Arctic--Parry, Franklin, Richardson, the Rosses, Back, and McClure--Rae was never knighted nor was he ever considered one of Britain's national heroes.[78]

Rae tried to substantiate his claims with photographs. While he was in the Arctic in 1853, he met up with Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, an American physician, and tireless self-promoter, in search of Franklin. Kane had a photographer, Amos Bonsall, accompany him on the voyage. Kane was hoping to take some photographs to take back to Bennett at the *Herald* for Bennett was beginning to wonder whether the new technology of Daguerreotype photography could increase his readership. Bennett wanted to bring the Arctic right to the people, and he felt photography would be even more effective than his authors' sensational words. A published letter written by Dr. Isaac Israel Hayes, surgeon of the expedition, on July 20 1853 confirmed that Bonsall did have some success with the

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[76] Ibid., November 8, 1854, 1.
[77] *London Illustrated News.* May 10, 1855, 3.
[78] R.L. Richards, *Dr. John Rae.* (Whitby: Whitby City Press, 1985) 11.

photographic equipment while in Greenland[79].

> A number of pictures have been taken, representing the geographical and picturesque character of the country. The difficulties apprehended in the working of the chymicals (sic) have been overcome, and Mr. Bousalt (sic) thinks he will be able to take pictures with a great deal of decency, even in the highest latitudes we may reach.[80]

The next year, as the party moved south to search for Franklin again, Bonsall took pictures at King William Island of several bodies that had been strewn across the landscape. These pictures were taken back to America, where Rae examined them before heading back to Britain. He claimed that the King William Island skeletons showed visible cut marks to suggest that the flesh of Franklin's men had been cut off with knives rather than the teeth of Arctic animals. The Times claimed "Dr. Rae will stop at nothing to have us believe the worst of Franklin and his crew. These pictures are unreliable and tell us nothing about what happened to them."[81] However, Bennett, Bonsall, Kane, and others all agreed that the pictures were unsatisfactory and they were never published in the media. Again Rae was criticised for going to extremes to prove his point. The pictures may have held something, but perhaps only a trained eye could see the alleged marks and Rae may have relied on his memory of being in the Arctic and seeing the bodies rather than remembering what he saw in the photos. For the next decade, several expeditions headed by explorers such as Sir Edward Belcher, Captain Inglefield, and Sir Francis McClintock brought back pictures but with no real substantiating evidence concerning the fate or

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[79] Douglas Wamsley and William Barr, "Early Photographers of the Canadian Arctic and Greenland" in J.C.H. King and Henrietta Lidchi, *Imaging the Arctic* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998) 38.
[80] *Ibid.*
[81] The *Times*, September 15 1855, 3.

Franklin, nor any unlocked any secrets of the Arctic in general.[82] It was discovered later that this was because the Daguerreotype was an inappropriate form of photography to use in the Arctic.

Although the British psyche concerning the Arctic had changed after Rae's report, the press and public alike tried to disparage Rae's findings in any way possible. The American press jumped all over the story and wrote some sensational headlines: "IS IT TRUE? Official Utterances of the latest in the Franklin Search. Rae's Report Shakes Britain, but the British Government Does Not Deny the Accusations.", "WERE THEY CANNIBALS? Shocking Accusations Out of Britain", and "THE SHAME OF THE BRITISH NAVY: How the Country's Best Seamen Lost Control."[83] This treatment of Franklin in the American press gave the British further cause to be upset. But as no more word was coming from the Arctic concerning the "truth" about Franklin, the first suspicions that Rae may have been at least partially correct began to surface. It was the beginning of a new way of viewing the Arctic. For centuries the Arctic had been viewed as a terrible sublime place of terror that contained its own devilish hints of beauty and grandeur. Knowing that Franklin had disappeared was tragic. But now knowing that the men had starved to death or had eaten each other was altogether different. The reality and the proximity of the disaster to the British public had eliminated all hints of the sublime when defining the Arctic. No longer was the Arctic sublime--it was real.

> No, there are no more sunny continents-no more islands of the blest-
> hidden under the far horizons, tempting the dreamer over the undiscovered
> seas; nothing but those weird and tragic shores, those cliffs of everlasting
> ice and mainlands of frozen snow, which have ever produced anything
> to us but a late and sad discovery of the depths of human heroism, patience,
> and bravery, such as imagination could scarcely dream of.[84]

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[82] Wamsley and Barr, "Early Photographers...", 45.
[83] The *Herald*, various dates in August, September, and November 1855. All front page stories.
[84] Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, June 1855, 589.

Four years after Rae's report was published, Francis Leopold McClintock and William Hobson, who searched for Franklin in a ship outfitted and sponsored by Lady Franklin, found bodies, relics, and a note that confirmed Franklin's exact day of death, and brought their findings back to Britain. They had confirmed that Franklin had been beset in the ice for two years and that the crews had marched south to find Back's Fish River and canoe south. Finally, the British press had the proof they needed. They came to gradually accept the disaster and were able to instill pride in the British navy by stressing the courage and the self-sacrifice of Franklin and his crew. The *London Illustrated News* trumpeted the heroic end of Franklin:

> Who shall tell how they struggled, how they hoped against hope, how the fainting few who reached Cape Herschel threw themselves on their knees and thanked their God that, if it so pleased Him that Britain and home should never be reached! He had granted them the glory of securing to their dear country the honour they had sought for her-the discovery of the North-West Passage![85]

The Arctic was no longer seen as sublime or picturesque, but Franklin was elevated to mythic status and revered as a hero for his suffering:

> ...at last the mystery of FRANKLIN'S fate is solved! We know where he died, we know the very day of his death....Alas! There can be no longer those sad wailings from an imaginary Tintagel to persuade the credulous that an ARTHUR still lives...We must learn that there are powers in nature too strong for man to overcome. The dauntless soul dies out amid the ice and snow; the spirit is never quenched though the body perishes...We now retire from the contest of horror, and if with grief we may leave the name of FRANKLIN engraved on the pillars which the energy of mankind had dared to erect as the landmark

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[85] *London Illustrated News*. October 15, 1859, 2.

of its research in the dull and lifeless region that guards the axis of the world[86].

In addition to the destruction of the sublime and picturesque and the new ideas of sensationalising fact to gain readership, there were other factors reported in the British press that helped to promote new images of the Arctic. Among these new ways of thinking was the photograph. As exploration continued throughout the Arctic, more and more scientists became interested in the Arctic for its own sake. Ethnographers took stunning pictures of the Inuit of the Northwest Territories and Greenland using the new wet-plate technology which allowed photography to be more successful in cold climates. Daguerreotypes were proven to be useless and what photographs did survive are indistinct. Hudson's Bay Company traders took photographs of Inuit settlements where Inuit children wore western-style clothes purchased at the forts--a sight definitely not seen or even believed down in the southern climates[87]. Another factor in the changing images of the Arctic was the approach to diet and transportation in the Arctic.

Before the last Franklin expedition, the Arctic explorers who covered the most territory were the British navy or expeditions which were not necessarily staffed with British officers, but sponsored by the Admiralty. This, of course, changed in 1854 with the navy's withdrawal from the Arctic to fight the Crimean War. It was at this time that more international expeditions headed to the Arctic. Americans, French, Norwegian, and German expeditions to name a few showed up in the Arctic, lured there by the Franklin saga and out of their own national self-interests. American presence in the Arctic finally led to the purchase of Alaska from the Russians in 1867, while the Danish began extensive geographical and ethnographic research in Greenland. This move toward more of a melting-pot image of the region also meant that new methods of travel and diet entered

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[86] London *Times*, SDeptember 23, 1859, 3.
[87] Pamela Stern. "The History of Canadian Arctic Photography: Issues of Territorial ands Cultural Sovereignty" in J.C.H King and Henrietta Lidchi, *Imaging the Arctic*, 47-50.

the Arctic. Though the British still preferred to haul their own sleds and dress in navy broadcloth, the Norwegians adopted dog sledding and the Americans began wearing seal skin clothing taught to them by Inuit women Most countries now understood the benefits of a vitamin C rich diet to fight scurvy in the Arctic, and although every private expedition sponsored by the British government was scurvy-free, naval expeditions reported outbreaks in scurvy as late as 1911.[88] These developments had different effects on the British and American press's representation of the Arctic. The newspapers in America tended to focus on the exciting exploits of its explorers, while the British press reported on the ability of its explorers to conquer the harsh climate of the Arctic. However, the British were guilty of making their journeys more difficult than need be in the Arctic.

The influx of new countries into the world of Arctic exploration meant new and fresh visions of the region. Those who held these visions were not political, military or naval heroes, or even professional explorers. They were researchers that had specific concerns and interests in the Arctic.

Of the developments in Arctic exploration in the late nineteenth century, none was more significant than the exploration of the Arctic for its own sake. Traditionally, the Arctic had been seen as an unfortunate reality or as an obstacle in the way of mass trading opportunities in the Orient. For British naval explorers and their promoters, like Barrow and John Murray, the Arctic was a key to fame, promotion and wealth. Even the ordinary seamen jumped at the chance to earn double pay because many of them believed the Admiralty's public relations line that death in the Arctic was more rare than in the tropics, where most preferred to serve. This is not to say, however, that geographical exploration was not a reality in the first half of the century. John Richardson walked out of the Arctic

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[88] K.J. Carpenter, *The History of Scurvy and Vitamin C.* (Cambridge:Cambridge university Press, 1986) 214.

twice with Franklin with a vast knowledge of plant and marine life that was referred to for the next 50 years. But probably the most accomplished scientific researcher of the Arctic for his day was John Rae. His publications looked at shifting ice patterns, native lifestyles, bird life, and the examination of frozen mammoth remains. He made a total of five expeditions to the Arctic and did not suffer hardship on any expedition.

These explorers helped to influence and new generation of explorers that, by 1855, private citizens began dreaming of travelling to the Arctic. So American explorers were not unlike their British counterparts, for they saw the possibility of fame, fortune, and constant press coverage. There are two American examples of explorers out for self promotion in years following Franklin: Elisha Kent Kane and Charles Francis Hall.

Kane was an American naval officer and physician who spent most of his leave time travelling the world. He volunteered for the first American Franklin search out of a romantic desire for heroic adventure.[89] He considered his experience exciting and it fuelled his passion to return and explore the region for himself. Immediately upon his return to America, he proceeded to plan for his next voyage. During his second Franklin search expedition of 1853-55, he was to sail to the northern point of Baffin Island to search for Franklin and conduct his own scientific experiments on magnetism, meteorology, and photography. Whether or not he seriously searched for Franklin does not matter now. He likely made this his platform, for he knew that to get financed for another trip, he had to prove he was doing honourable deeds while in the Arctic and his blurred and indistinguishable Daguerreotypes were a piece to that puzzle. This ultimately was his goal--to get financial backing back in America and return again where he would achieve fame and notoriety .

Charles Francis Hall also started his Arctic career with "noble" intentions. Hall, a

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[89] G.W. Corner. *Doctor Kane of the Arctic Seas* (Philadephia: Temple University Press, 1972) 28.

journalist from Cincinnati felt that God had called upon him to solve the mystery of Franklin. "It seemed to me as if I had been called, if I may so speak, to try and do the work."[90] Hall lived and worked among the Inuit for a total of seven years over two expeditions and he found the Arctic an alluring and vastly harsher than life back in Ohio. He freely adopted the Inuit lifestyle and he believed that the Arctic had become an essential part of his existence, a concept that the British clearly did not share. Hall explained his commitment to the Arctic to the American Geographical and Statistical Society in 1871:

> Many who have written me, or who have appeared to me personally, think that I am an adventurous spirit...Not so. It does not require that heart which they suppose I have. The Arctic region is my home. I love it dearly, its storms, glaciers, icebergs, and when I am there among them, it seems as if I were in an earthly heaven or a heavenly earth.[91]

Though Hall seems eccentric, he was genuine in his love for the Arctic. He also had another connection that served him better than all previous explorers. As he was a journalist and printer by trade, he had numerous contacts in the media on both sides of the Atlantic. But his considerable influences were on the New York media. A second contact he had would also help to serve the push for more media exposure for Arctic exploration, particularly expeditions led by Americans.

Hall had a friendship with Henry Grinnell, the wealthy New York merchant who Hall would later call "the father of American Arctic exploration"[92] Grinnell became interested in Arctic exploration after hearing of Hall's adventures and, particularly, after Hall encouraged him to attend a public hearing where Lady Franklin petitioned President

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[90] *New York Times*, April 3, 1865, 3.
[91] *Ibid*, March 15, 1871, 4.
[92] *Ibid.*

Zachary Taylor for American aid to search for her husband. It was Grinnell, not Taylor, who financed four American expeditions to the Arctic and his efforts even saw the introduction of the American navy in the search efforts. But Grinnell also had another trick to use.

Grinnell established a great connection to the American people by being able to give them what they wanted particularly through the media. Grinnell encouraged the new powerful New York press to drum up support for his search efforts by publishing updates, urging the public to give its support to the humanitarian efforts to find Franklin, and to foster pride in Americans travelling the world. The American people were now seeing the Arctic with fresh eyes. Grinnell's accounts of the Arctic were different than had been seen before. The stories were written on a personal note, informing the public about the dangers, bravery, and heroism of the crews. But Grinnell also used these articles as a propagandist platform, intertwining passionate arguments for the reasons why America should be in the Arctic, and touting scientific, commercial, and religious reasons to intensify the mass public appeal of the region. The public response to the newspaper articles was powerful because of the immediacy and of the fact that something tragic may happen by the time the next update found its way to the editors. This made the story and appeal more thrilling, but it also served a purpose for the editors. First, the more thrilling the story could be, the more these explorers would captivate a public anxious for heroes. So the Arctic became in the American newspapers, a backdrop for the heroic exploits of American explorers who struggled against the harsh elements. Secondly, it allowed the press to raise money to sponsor other expeditions, thus legitimising their sensationalist reporting of the Arctic as a means of promoting national pride in an American presence in the Arctic.

When Hall returned from his first expedition in 1862, the *New York Herald*

featured a page wide headline, "HALL"S SUCCESS IN THE ARCTIC"[93] and a picture of the Arctic landscape that was larger than the picture provided for the Civil War battle at Shiloh. Grinnell showed his belief in the American public's desire to read about explorers and showed his commitment to have the press cover it by commenting that "Fondness for adventure will lead men, so long as the world lasts, to seek new sources of excitement, to create new heroes, and Arctic explorers will never be found wanting..."[94]. The *New York Times* gave the first page to Hall's self-serving claims and the *Chicago Tribune* touted Hall as "the greatest explorer since Columbus"[95] A new weekly in New York, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, made Hall's expedition the cover subject of its first edition.[96].

Several weeks later, the *Herald* devoted four columns to Hall. The space allowed is extraordinary considering the intensity of the American Civil War. There is also the advancement of reporting in the 1860s that allowed more advances in news gathering, transmission, reporting, and technology. Papers no longer had to rely on sensationalism alone to attract readers, though this did not mean that sensationalism died completely in every major daily. With these improvements, traditional sensationalist papers, such as the weeklies, began to attract wider audiences that wanted better written stories in addition to their sensationalist writings. By 1870, most of the sensationalist papers had included more informative, better-written sections, and were considered some of the world's best newspapers. In fact, the most successful editor in America to keep the sensationalist allure of the Arctic alive in the imaginations of the American public was James Gordon Bennett Jr.

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[93] New York *Herald*, August 24, 1862, 1.
[94] *Ibid*, August 25, 1862, 1.
[95] *Chicago Tribune*. August 25, 1862, 1.
[96] *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Paper*, August 1862, 2.

Chapter Five: James Gordon Bennett Jr. Redefining the Image of the Arctic.

James Gordon Bennett Jr.'s career was pretty much defined in childhood. He grew up in New York watching his father James Gordon Sr. create sensationalist journalism, focusing on murder trials, high society scandals, divorce cases, and anything else that was not considered political or economic news. But Bennett Jr. also saw the move away from sensationalist reporting in the dailies, as his father had learned to be, he was greatly influenced by the heroic deeds of Franklin, Hall, and Kane.

Bennett was apprenticed to Henry Grinnell in the 1860s, since his father felt he needed to learn more about journalism from a broader base. Bennett was witness to the Hall and Kane coverage and soon found himself drawn to the Arctic as a subject he wanted to promote. Bennett's own fascination with the Arctic convinced him that topics such as the navigation of the Northwest Passage, and the attainment of the North Pole could be of great interest to the American people. One of his earliest attempts at creating Arctic news was to send reporters with the American relief mission to find Hall in 1873. There was a reporter assigned to each of the search ships, and these reports became the first published Arctic report ever written for immediate publication in an American newspaper. The reporter to be first published was Martin Maher, who reported the following from the ship *Juniata*:

> There was a terrible sea running and the spray danced into the air to a great height and could be seen overleaping the icebergs of on hundred feet high, and the waves, lashed out in a fury by the hurricane, burst against those mountains of ice, breaking off ponderous looking, solid masses which fell into the sea with a rushing, deafening sound. The destruction of the boat and all on board seemed imminent.[97]

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[97] The New York *Herald.* September 11, 1873, 5.

Since the Arctic was now seen as a place of wonder and excitement, something that everyone should have the chance to witness either in person or through a journalist, Bennett Jr. believed the best way to report about the Arctic was to have a roving reporter there at all times. He felt the Arctic was to be revered not feared.

In 1875, Bennett helped finance another voyage to the Arctic, this time Allen Young's voyage in the *Pandora.* This journey was to navigate the Northwest Passage in one season, not for commercial reasons, but to see if it could be done quickly. There was also the minor goal of circling King William Island in search of any Franklin relics that may have been missed in the previous decades. Bennett also wanted to collect any news from the British Arctic Expedition under George Nares. Bennett believed that the selling of newspapers featuring first hand accounts by explorers from the Arctic would boost his popularity among readers and his peers. Janarius MacGhan was chosen as the reporter to go on Bennett's "Arctic beat", and perhaps more than his predecessors. McGhan emphasised not only the thrill of the expedition, but the feel of the Arctic and his vivid descriptions were credited with fuelling the public's craving for more Arctic heroes:

> For hundreds of miles in every direction, it is the same. The whole north coast of America, from Bearing Strait to Hudson's Bay, with the great Archipelago north of it, is nothing but stone, rock, and ice, not only without a tree or shrub, or blade of grass, but without even a handful of earth to hide its savage nakedness. The water is ice, the land is rock, the sea a frozen corpse, the earth a bare, grinding skeleton, that meets you everywhere, that seizes you by its boney clasp and will not let you go, the skeleton of a dead world.[98]

These reporters were reporting on everyday life in the Arctic for the explorers and the public craved knowledge of what life was like beset in ice for a winter. Bennett

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[98] New York *Herald*, September 2, 1875, 2.

realised that the Arctic would become a place of awe, not fear, if it could be proven that an everyday, untrained explorer, such as a reporter, could survive the Arctic landscape. Reading a "daily diary" helped to cement in the readers' minds that the Arctic was not a terrible, foreboding as their ancestors had believed to be true, but rather it was a place that everyone could dream about seeing one day.

The *Pandora* had been plagued by heavy ice for weeks, and the ships turned around to avoid being trapped further. Even this retreat was filled with danger and excitement. McGhan's story was published in Britain by Bennett, who wanted as much coverage of his Arctic exploits as possible.

> We succeeded and we were driven back into Peel Strait. Ice was rapidly closing the outlet, and the young ice was forming on the waves like oil, and rising and falling without breaking. At last we found a "lead" closed at the further end by a broadneck of ice. This we charged and got through, and finally made our escape![99]

Within a year of McGhan's return to New York, his accounts were published in both America and Britain as a compilation entitled *Under the northern lights* [sic]. It became a best seller, selling 100,000 copies in its first year and led to McGhan being hired as a foreign correspondent by the British daily. McGhan's Arctic assignment legitimised his stature as a world reporter and it helped Bennett increase the readership of his newspaper. In 1878, Bennett continued to use the Arctic to gain increased circulation. He hired William Gilder to replace McGhan and sent him on another Arctic expedition he was sponsoring. This expedition, led by Frederick Schwatka, was sent to look for records and journals of the Franklin expedition.

Gilder by experience and training was a sensationalist writer. He received his

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[99] *London Times*, October 18, 1875, 5.

training at *The World* newspaper in New York in the 1860s. *The World* was the most sensationalist newspaper in all of New York and remained so, even after the retreat from sensationalism during the Civil War years. Gilder continued with this style of sensationalism, and Bennett did not seem to discourage it. He felt he would do what was necessary to gain readership and to enthral the public with tales of intrigue and heroism.

After being stranded near Daly Bay on the Northwest side of Hudson's Bay, the party of five men spent the winter learning survival tips from the Inuit. In the Spring of 1879, the group travelled by dog sled to King William Island and found a skeleton that McClintock had missed in 1859. This became the stuff of sensationalism for Gilder:

> There was little doubt they were in a desperate condition, in fact, as we subsequently learned for other witnesses, there were almost unmistakable evidences of their being compelled to resort to cannibalism until at the last they absolutely starved to death.[100]

Gilder's claims echoed back to a time when Rae was shunned for stating the same thing. However, Gilder did not meet with negative press in America for his claims. Immediately after the expedition returned to New York in 1880, Gilder's accounts appeared in the *Herald*, frequently taking up the entire front page and ran everyday from September 20 to October 6. In fact the expedition coverage was given more time than the election of President James Garfield a month later, or even his assassination the next year. Bennett may not have been the first to realise that a story that takes several days or weeks to flesh out is more exciting and sells more newspapers than a story that runs once, but at least he understood it. By keeping the story fresh and in the minds of the readers constantly, he was helping to foster a permanent image of explorers as heroes in the minds

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[100] New York Herald, September 25, 1880, 1.

of the readers.

Much of Gilder's account was wrapped up in sensationalist headlines to draw in the reader. Headlines like "Eight Days Between Meals" were enough to draw anyone's attention, but like a modern tabloid, the reader soon discovers that it was the dog team, not the men, who went eight days between meals.[101] Yet other headlines were not misleading, such as "One Hundred and One Degrees Below Freezing Point" which referred to the fact that the winter of 1878-79 was one of the coldest ever recorded.

Gilder's account of emphasising the excitement and danger of the exploration thrilled the New York reading public, helping him to become a celebrity, and he was credited with boosting the sales of the Herald. But unlike most of his predecessors, and despite his sensationalist leanings, he did more to enlighten the public about living in the Arctic. He mentioned the perils explorers endured, but he also described the typical day to day Arctic life to readers back home:

> It is one of the great discomforts of Arctic travel that the exercise of walking wets one's fur stockings with perspiration. At night they freeze, and it is anything but agreeable to put bare feet into stockings filled with ice. But it is astonishing how soon one gets accustomed to that sort of thing and how little he minds it after a while.[102]

In contrast to the Herald's constant sponsoring of expeditions to the Arctic, British newspapers did not begin to sponsor their own expeditions until the 1890s. Press coverage of the Arctic was hard to find in Britain in the 1860s and 1870s, probably because of Britain's withdrawal from the Arctic to fight the Crimean war and the disillusion that followed the Franklin episode. What news coverage was being printed in British dailies

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[101] *Ibid*, September 21, 1880, 1.
[102] *Ibid.*, September 21, 1880, 1.

concerning the Arctic came from men like Bennett who wanted to increase his readership on both sides of the Atlantic. There was one notable exception to this lack of press and that was the British Arctic Expedition of 1875-76.

In the mid 1860s, there was a small resurgence of those who wanted the British to go back to the Arctic for the sake of science. These people were not affiliated with the navy, but were members of geographical societies. Sherard Osborn read a paper in 1865 to the Royal Geographical Society in which he advocated a renewal of Arctic exploration. He harkened back to Barrow's desire in the 1820s to give the navy a respectable raison d'être. But by this time, the navy was nearly broke after the efforts in the Crimean War. It would take Osborn another decade before he could convince the British Admiralty to launch another assault on the Arctic. In 1875, Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli approved the expedition saying that it had been sanctioned because of the "scientific advantages to be derived from it, as well as the importance of encouraging that spirit of maritime enterprise which has ever distinguished the English people."[103] Behind the government's public statements about the expedition, there were three motives for it. The first was to help the British whaling industry in exerting Britain's right to be in the Arctic, the second was the navy needed to rekindle their Arctic supremacy, and third Britain needed to boost its prestige in the Arctic with its people.

Unlike previous years when the British press seemed disinterested in the Arctic, they could not say enough about the new expedition. Even the *London Times*, who typically opposed Arctic exploration during the Crimean War, wrote favourably about the expedition's high hopes for success. The *London Illustrated News* and the journal *Navy* also reported high optimism. Thus, in 1876, when disastrous losses due to scurvy caused the expedition to arrive home a year early, the press expressed enormous disappointment

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[103] *London Times*. April 5, 1875. 3.

in something they had so highly played up. The British newspapers reported the failure as a major disappointment and a waste of the government's time and money: "Verily the expedition of 1875-6 has but little of which to boast," reported the *London Times*, "It went out like a rocket and came back like the stick."[104] This would be the last expedition to the Arctic, by the British, until the 1890s.

Where the British press condemned the failures of its country's expeditions, the American press brought out the sensationalism of failed expeditions. When Horace Greely's expedition to the North Pole failed in 1884, the American press jumped all over it. On July 18, 1884, most of the major papers in America led their front pages with the Greely rescue. The *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times* devoted three pages each to the rescue story. And the story was sensational:

> The story told by Connell from his recollection of their starving experiences is heartrending: how they burned the hair off their sealskin boot and coats, cut them into strips, boiled them into a stew and ate them voraciously till the stomach rebelled, and weakness and nausea ensued for some. Nature gave no call for ten, twelve, fifteen days, and then haemorrhage and consequent weakness ensued, prostrating the victim for days.[105]

During the next several weeks, the press kept a close eye on the expedition and prominent coverage was given to those who passed away and their subsequent funerals.

> Amid the strains of mournful music and followed by sorrowing relatives and thousands of sympathizing friends the mortal remains of Sergt. William H. Cross, one of the noblest and heroic victims of the Greely Expedition, were yesterday borne to their final resting place in the city of his nativity...The floral tributes were many and beautiful, the largest and handsomest offering being a huge white pillow resting at

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[104] *Ibid.*, August 20, 1876, 1.
[105] *New York Times*, July 19, 1884, 1.

> the foot of the casket of white flowers...Among the floral offerings was the floral design of a heart composed of white flowers, on which a touchingly suggestive word "Papa" the tribute of Charlie, the only child of the deceased.[106]

The accounts of the Greely expedition included everything the readers were searching for in a hero: adventure, sacrifice, illness, hardship, suicide, and insanity. Then the *New York Herald*, thanks to Bennett, broke with an even more sensationalist story: cannibalism.

For a number of days, Bennett had sent down reporters to prowl around the shipyards where the rescue ships were docked and unloading. Persistence seemed to pay off, for the result was a massive headline titled "THE HORRORS OF CAPE SABINE" in August that told a different story to the one Connell reported about eating seal skin boots:

> As a matter of fact, they were kept alive on human flesh...The bodies were dug from their graves in the little hill. Most of the blankets contained nothing but heaps of white bones, many of them picked clean...It is reported that the only men who escaped the knife were the three or four who died of scurvy The amputated limbs of men who afterward perished were eagerly devoured as food.[107]

The *New York Herald* followed up with even more graphic accounts that were not based on fact, but gossip and innuendo. The response to the story was varied. Readership went up, yet there were written complaints by some readers of the salacious tone of the stories. The *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Washington Post* downplayed the sensationalism (though didn't totally abolish it) and did question the accuracy of the story. The *New York Times* responded with "It has been discovered that there is a basis for

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[106] *Ibid.*, August 21, 1884, 1.
[107] *New York Herald,* August 22, 1884, 1.

the charges, but the circumstances of the case are by no means so horrible or as sensational as the published story indicates."[108]

But sensationalism can easily influence a newspaper. The normally conservative daily the *Chicago Tribune* picked up the wave the *Herald* was riding and went on to report, inaccurately, saying: "Yet of Private Henry, who died only 16 days before the relief party arrived, there was nothing left but skin and bones. The head had been thrown into the sea to prevent identification."[109]

But as extreme as the *Herald* could be, there was no more extreme reporting of this story than that found in the *World* from New York. It comes under the headline "EATING DEAD COMRADES", and the commentator is unidentified:

> He would give years from him life to forget about it, but, he said, that first taste, the sensation of having between his teeth the flesh of one who used to be his friend, was with him always. walking or sleeping, he seemed to feel his lips pressing that smooth, flabby meat that must be choked down somehow if he would live. And then in the inhuman, savage way of getting it! Each feeder upon such food must cut off his own shreds of flesh. No friend could be found to perform the horrible office. Every man, if he would eat, must of necessity be his own butcher. And these cannibalistic orgies, these midnight feats, were secrets to be kept. Body after body was stripped of its flesh, bur none of those...dared speak of this. As he thrusts into the open flame on the end of a pointed stick, no one of his companions utters a word. And when the tearing the smoking flesh with his teeth, he lies down and another of the would-be sleepers rises up and goes down that path, knife in hand, it is easy to guess his horrid purpose.[110]

Predictably, the British press version of these charges were not a sensationalised,

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[108] *New York Times*, August 26, 1884, 1.
[109] *Chicago Tribune*, August 14, 1884, 1.
[110] The World, August 15, 1884, 1.

although it still made the front page of most of the dailies. The *London Times* was astute enough to include information that the American papers chose to leave out:

> Lieutenant Greely was just able to support himself of his hands and knees. He was dressed in fur, with a red knitted hood, which added to his haggard appearance. His long hair and beard, his wasted form and deep, sunken eyes, and his feeble voice, which he strove to control, but which revealed him overwhelming feelings, brought moisture to the eyes of the strongest of the relief party.[111]

The charges of cannibalism caused much discussion in both America and Britain, some of it scathing, but all of it interesting. The readers on both sides of the Atlantic seemed to be caught in the middle of the war between editors who either debunked or praised each other for the handling of such stories. But one thing remained: the public wanted more and it reconfirmed, through the press's direct involvement, the hero worshipping of Arctic explorers. *The Daily News* in Britain said: "A doctor who handled these bodies declares they bore no resemblance to of mutilation, and there was nothing to suggest that the flesh had been eaten."[112].

Eventually the furore died down. Bodies were exhumed, which showed that flesh had been stripped from some of the bodies, but in general, the American public, like their British counterparts of the 1850s, wanted to believe that those on the Greely expedition knew nothing of cannibalism. In an editorial that echoes voices from the Franklin attitude in Britain, the *Chicago Tribune* argued for an end to Arctic exploration:

> And now let us, in the name of decency and humanity, have no more investigations of Arctic voyages. Let us pay all honour to the living and the dead, to the rescued and their rescuers, but

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[111] *London Times*, August 15, 1884. 1.
[112] *The Daily News*, August 20, 1884, 2.

> may the country be spared the affliction of such investigations
> as we have had in the case of more than one disastrous
> Arctic expedition.[113]

A week later the *London Illustrated News* captured this same sentiment as it carried the banner for much of the British press by saying.

> Why then should any more Arctic expeditions be sent out, either
> From England or America? The only result is much suffering, terrible
> loss of life, and the amendments of maps and charts that are of no
> general utility. Apollyons are too many and Greathearts too few
> for us with regard for equanimity this waste of men, money and energy.[114]

But the topic would not drop or even fade. Explorers themselves were not willing to consider abandoning the Arctic. The lure was too strong, and even they had come to view their predecessors as mythical heroes. Like all heroes, Arctic explorers were ready to face death to attain their goals. Sir George Nares equated Arctic exploration as waging his own battle: "I regret what has happened to Greely...but battling with northern ice is like any other warfare, and some must fall."[115]

But just as explorers wanted to continue with exploration so did certain newspapers as the turn of the twentieth century approached. Focus began to turn away from the Northwest Passage and Franklin and more towards the attainment of the North Pole and although historians have generally viewed the Peary/Cook controversy as a conflict between two explorers, it was also an equal struggle between two New York newspapers to become one the country's most respected newspapers. The war of the media over Arctic exploration had arrived in America.

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[113] *Chicago Tribune*, July 18, 1884, 3.
[114] *London Illustrated News,* August 19, 1885, 1.
[115] London *Times,* August 19, 1885, 1.

Chapter Six: "The Newspaper War at the North Pole: Redefining Sensationalism in the Twentieth Century".

Without a doubt, the most popular American polar explorer is Robert Peary. His name is as popular with American school children as Franklin's is with British school children. Peary is also widely accepted by the American public as the first man to reach the North Pole, and he apparently did so under much media coverage. He is remembered today as a national hero, a great patriot who named his ship after President Theodore Roosevelt, and who will always be remembered for his famous quote "Stars and Stripes nailed to the North Pole."[116]

But there is another side to Peary that is necessary to understand his rivalry with explorer Frederick Cook and his relationship with the media. Peary was the most self-serving, arrogant, and mean-spirited of *all* Arctic explorers. He despised his rivals and anyone who he felt was trying to share his status of national hero, whether they were dead or living. He was condescending and insensitive to those who served with him on his expedition, and he was completely servile to those who he felt could help in his quest for personal glory. Those he played up to were the New York media.

These traits can be found as early as 1887 in a letter to his mother. This letter shows a man obsessed with his own self-worth: "I *must* have fame, and cannot reconcile myself to years of commonplace drudgery and a name late in life when I see an opportunity to gain it now...I want my fame *now*!"[117] Yet, even as these traits are not well respected by most, they did serve him well in his perseverance to be recognised and to attain the goals he set for himself. He was so charged with his insatiable appetite for fame

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[116] *New York Times*, September 7, 1909, 2.
[117] W. Herbert. *The Noose of Laurels*. (London: Stoddard and Houghton, 1989) 65. Emphasis is Peary's.

and fortune, that nothing would get in his way. His drive led him to cover more miles across the Arctic than any other explorer, including Dr. John Rae.

Peary give no hint in his journals that he had a particular attachment for the Arctic. He viewed it solely as a means to gain fame in a goal that hadn't been attained to date. Peary planned an journey to reach the North Pole in 1898, but his plan failed despite having played himself up in the media as the man to do the job. He had built himself up so high that his failure was seen almost to be as disappointing as that of the Greely expedition. The *New York Times* summed up the general feeling in its front page head line "PEARY FAILED TO REACH THE POLE". To save face, the next day's edition had Peary declaring

> The gain to the scientific world by the results of my work in the Arctic regions are of far more factual value than if I had discovered the North Pole. The discovery of the North Pole is more or less a spectacular fact...The departments of science which will be benefited by my sojourn in the north are geology, meteorology, anthropology, and natural history. The full result of my labors cannot fully be ascertained or even imagined until the observations I have taken have been worked out by scientists...the work I have done, I am vain enough to think, is great.[118]

For a man who, unlike Rae, never learned the Inuit language or did any ethnographic studies to have claimed such successes was completely false and self-serving. But he was making steady gains into planning his next big trip to the North Pole, but this time, he would have competition from a man altogether different in personality to Peary, and viewed as his biggest rival.

Frederick Cook was younger and far more courteous and honourable that Peary. Cook was a physician in New York and, in 1891, was looking for an adventure. He

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[118] *New York Times*, September 20, 1902, 2.

responded to a newspaper ad that was calling for volunteers to join an Arctic expedition. That expedition was none other than Peary's Greenland expedition. Cook was chosen as the physician and seemed to get along well with Peary. But that changed when the expedition returned to New York. Cook had asked Peary if he could publish a paper on the ethnographic studies he took of the Inuit in Greenland. Peary refused, saying the information was of no importance to society. Cook disagreed and published his paper, thus ending their friendship. For a while the two men went their separate ways. Cook travelled to the Antarctic, and Peary continued with his Arctic journeys. Their paths crossed again in 1905 when Cook claimed in the New York Times that he was the first man to climb Mount McKinley, while Peary had returned from the Arctic that year. Peary was dismayed when the younger Cook got the same amount of media coverage. Then to Peary's further dismay, Cook's published journal of his McKinley journey became a best seller, while Peary's book on his latest Arctic expedition was a flop, only selling 2300 copies its first year. But this battle was only the beginning.

In 1907, Cook sailed north to find the Pole and although he tried to keep the expedition under wraps, word leaked out to Peary and the newspapers that Cook was on his way. Despite Cook's abilities to succeed he was not viewed as being as experienced as Peary and the rumours of his journey to the Pole were largely ignored by the mainstream American press. But when a letter reached New York which had been written by Cook and sent home with a member of the expedition, the contents stirred anger in Peary. "I have hit upon a new route," wrote Cook in 1909, "to the north pole and will stay to try it. By way of Buchanan Bay and Ellesmere and northward to Nansen Strait over the Polar Sea seems to me a very good route...and here are natives and dogs for the task."[119].

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[119] *Ibid*, September 2, 1909, 2. Though this letter had been written in the summer of 1908, it never appeared in the press until a year later.

Peary was incensed. He felt that Cook was invading the land he alone was meant to conquer. What more, was Cook used methods that Peary had never considered or failed at. Thus, he saw Cook as a fool. Peary used the platform of the New York newspapers to voice his outrage and demanded that geographical societies around the world refuse any dealings with Cook because "Dr. Cook's action in going north...for the admitted purpose of forestalling me is one of which no man possessing a sense of honour would be guilty!"[120] Peary promptly organised his own assault on the North Pole, and while he was somewhere in the Arctic on September 2, 1909, newspapers around the world trumpeted his worst fear.

On September 1, 1909, James Gordon Bennett Jr. responded to a telegram sent to him the day before. It was from Cook who offered to sell his harrowing story of reaching the Pole for $3000. Bennett quickly snapped at the story, for he had seen nothing of this magnitude since the Greely disaster, and he knew he would easily make up the payment in increased sales. The next day, the *New York Herald*, the *London Times* and the *Paris Herald* ran five pages of Cook's assertion that he reached the Pole and all featured the headline "COOK ATTAINS THE NORTH POLE!".[121] He told of hardship, nearly freezing and starving to death and almost missing his supply depot on his journey back. The *Herald* sold every copy that day, about 500,000 copies and Bennett received telegrams from all over the world to purchase the rights to print the story in their own newspapers. Many of those papers paid both Bennett and Cook handsomely to print Cook's account told in his own words. His story was published was September 3 in Tokyo and those who could not contact Bennett ended up lifting the story from the Paris edition. The American press presented Cook's claim sensationally with banner headlines,

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[120] *Ibid.*, May 28, 1908, 1.
[121] New York *Herald*, September 2, 1909, 1.

comments from other Arctic explorers, scientific analyses from leading geographers, and eulogistic editorials espousing the heroic efforts of Cook. Coverage actually increased in the following days as more information arrived and when more experts could be interviewed for their reactions. But although the newspapers realised the immediacy and selling power of Cook's story, not all readily accepted his claims, because there was still the lingering belief that Peary was the more experienced and capable of the two.

From the outset, the New York Times was leery of Cook's claims and wrote an editorial with the headline "HAS MAN REACHED THE POLE"[122]. Likewise the New York *Tribune* (which incidentally was owned by Peary's friend Whitlaw Reid) did not view Cook's claim to be factual:

> Keen businessmen on their way to their offices, who paused to read the announcement, usually smiled incredulously, and passed along without comment. It is not denied that Dr. Cook may have reached the Pole, and there is no patriotic American who does not wish most fervently that the New York physician may have achieved the goal of the ages, the goal for which so many heroes of all nations have vainly struggled and died, but, to speak frankly, , the average American has become so accustomed to the announcement of wonderful discoveries in American newspapers, which subsequently have failed to justify, that he pauses by instinct, and before accepting the announcement literally, he naturally demands abundant proof.[123]

More condemnation from Arctic experts and high society rolled in. George Melville of the *Jeannette* expedition said "Without backing, money, or equipment, I don't see how Dr. Cook could have reached the Pole, let alone lived through the journey. I can't conceive that Dr. Cook has done it 'on his nerve' so to speak."[124] Two days later after

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[122] *Ibid.*, September 2, 1909, 5.
[123] *New York Tribune*, September 3,1909, 4.
[124] New York *Herald,* September 2, 1909, 2.

more reports were published Melville had this to offer: "This cannot be substantiated...It is perfectly easy for a man to go to a certain point and say he has reached the Pole. I am more convinced now that this claim is a fake."[125] Even the famed Harvard astronomer Percival Lowell quipped that 'scientifically the discovery of the North Pole is of the same significance as a new record in the 100 yard dash."[126]

Despite the doubters, most newspaper articles in America were favourable to Cook, and words of praise came from men such as Greely, Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, and Roald Amundsen. The belief in Cook's claims took a giant leap on September 6 when Cook arrived in Denmark and was greeted by hundreds of well wishers. He was immediately swept away on a tidal wave of hero-worship and constantly praised by friends and strangers. Few things, however, show the utter popularity of an individual as the creation of the Cook toys and Cook hats. The Cook hat became the rage of women's high fashion in Paris and London:

> The Dr. Cook hat is suggestive of the polar region. It seems as high as the cartoonist's picture of the Pole, although in reality it is only two feet tall. It is made of brown fur, fuzzy and expensive. It looks massive and solid enough to supply a good soup stock in case of Arctic exigency.[127]

Cook was also hounded by reporters wanting to get "the" story. It appeared to Cook that "Fleet Street had moved to Copenhagen."[128]. In a press conference attended by 80 world journalists, he claimed to have proof that he had indeed attained the Pole and that he was to deliver that proof soon to the scientific community. His apparent honesty

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[125] *New York Times*, September 5, 1909, 1.
[126] *Ibid.*, September 3, 1909, 1.
[127] *London Times*, September 7, 1909, 3.
[128] *Ibid.*

and integrity kept the reporters waiting for his next move. He had literally, overnight, become the Western world's media star. But Cook's claim was to come under doubt again when on September 7 another story rocked the journalism world and the American public had to decide who the real hero was.

The *New York Times* printed a story on September 7 that read "STARS AND STRIPES NAILED TO THE NORTH POLE." The claim came from Peary that he was the one who truly reached the pole and it sparking an all-out media war that the public had never before seen. Bennett, who knew what Peary was like, didn't show much interest in his claims, passing them off as another fruitless and boring claim of reaching the Pole. However, one editor who believed in Peary over Cook was William Reich, who took over editorship of the *New York Times* in 1908. Peary's story, all 7500 words was published that day, but new information was slow in getting transmitted and printed because of bad weather conditions where Peary was stationed. The full story was not published until the 10th and 11th of September. The story reported how Peary had reached the Arctic a full three weeks before Cook. Peary claimed that his journey back to Indian Harbour took only three days and he would have got the story out sooner had the bad weather not hampered his ability to send telegrams.

Because of Peary's popularity and more varied experience in the Arctic, his announcement received more attention than Cook's *The New York Times* gave Peary six full pages while the *Herald* gave him four pages, while all newspapers published the same photograph which Peary claimed to have been taken at the Pole. And although the British newspapers did not give Peary (or Cook's) claims as much space as the American newspapers, Peary still dominated over other subjects. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* and *London Times* each devoted two pages to Peary's claim. The literary world also jumped into the fray. Cassell's publishing house in New York asked adventure author Frank Shaw if he would produce a 70,000 word children's book on polar exploration that

captured the Peary hero-myth. Shaw wrote the book in a week and it was on sale November 1, 1909. But it wasn't just Peary's claim that received attention in the New York press.

Peary continued to attack Cook every chance he could. Before Peary released his own claim, he condemned Cook in the New York *Times* as a liar and a cheat. Peary said:

> Do not trouble about Cook's story or attempt to explain any discrepancies in his statements. This affair will settle itself. He has not been at the Pole on April 21, 1908, or anytime after that. He has simply handed the public a gold Brick. These statements are made advisedly, and I have proof of them. When he makes a full statement of his journey to some geographical society ...I shall be in a position to furnish material that may prove interesting reading for the public.[129]

This is in stark contrast to the glowing comments Cook had about Peary: "I am proud that a fellow American has reached the Pole...He is a brave man and I am confident that if the reports are true, his observations will confirm mine and set at rest all doubts."[130] The paper war was on.

The *New York Times* hoped that its increased circulation could be made at the expense of the *Herald.* So Peary and the *Times*, which staked its entire reputation on the experience of the older explorer, began an aggressive campaign to debunk Cook in the hope that the acknowledgement of Peary's success and Cook's attempt at fraud would increase the sales of the *Times*, while destroying those of their rival, the *Herald.* Bennett could see the war looming over the horizon so he paid Cook $25,000 for the right to publish four exclusive instalments then turn around and sell them to other papers both for profit and more exposure to rival the *Times.*

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[129] *New York Times*, September 11, 1909, 1.
[130] New York *Herald*, September 12, 1909, 1.

As the rest of the publishing world saw the Peary/Cook controversy as a nice bit of scandal to sell more newspapers, the Times and Herald saw it as an all out war and used mud-slinging, name calling, and other techniques to win the fight. The *Times* was very vindictive and negative towards Cook while the *Herald* praised both men though preferring to take Cook's word. But as time would tell, the press that reported on the controversy outside of America showed Peary was losing support rather than gaining. Arctic experts were starting to favour Cook's story so the *Times* had to change its strategy to win over the readers support for Peary.

By September 21, the Peary/Cook war was primarily fought out in the pages of the *Times* and *Herald.* Most other papers had abandoned the fight. The *Times* had found out that Cook still had not handed in his "proof" to any of the geological societies and the *Times* also made a bold remark that the pictures published in his September 2 story were actually seven years old. The Explorer's Club, of which Cook was a member, also came forward to state that they believed Cook's claim of climbing Mount McKinley was a hoax. Although the hero-worshipping public initially ignored that statement, the topic didn't go away and the *Times* exploited it. Cook of course denied the accusations, but the final blow to Cook's reputation came when the Pinkerton Detective Agency was hired by the National Geographic Society to check into the McKinley affair. A signed affidavit by Barrille, who accompanied Cook to McKinley stated that they did not reach the summit, only the highest western peak and that was where the photograph came from. The tide of popularity shifted now to Peary and there was no going back.

Headlines such as "COOK"S CLAIM TO DISCOVERY OF THE NORTH POLE REJECTED: OUTRAGED DENMARK CALLS HIM A DELIBERATE SWINDLER!" appeared, and in that story the *Times* reported the Commission's findings: "The Commission is therefore of the opinion that...there is no proof that Dr. Cook reached

either the summit of Mount McKinley or the North Pole."[131].

To further destroy Cook's reputation, in January, before *Hampton's Magazine* was to release Peary's account of his journey, the journal hinted at Cook's mental state and suggested he was insane. Needless to say the *Times* jumped all over this and reported "COOK ADMITS FAKE. MAKES PLEA OF INSANITY."[132]. If Cook's reputation was ruined before, this headline made sure it permanently was and Cook became the laughing stock of America. There was even a movement to obliterate him from the history books on Arctic exploration.

The press had never done anything before, or since, so deliberately to change someone's story to suit their own needs. They had played a roll in the hero-myth making status of Peary and the war plunged the media in general into a state that was described by Charles Reich. Media became "an immensely powerful machine, ordered, legalistic, controlling, and utterly out of human control, wholly and perfectly indifferent to human values."[133]

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[131] *New York Times*, December 22, 1909, 1.
[132] *Ibid.*, January 15, 1910, 1.
[133] *London Daily Times*, January 17, 1910, 6.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

So it appeared that at least as the press was concerned Peary was the clear victor in the attainment of the North Pole. What is certain is that Cook was never able to restore his reputation, and more proof was to come later that he never reached the summit of Mount McKinley either. In fact, Cook came to be as big a self-promoter as Peary, though Peary clearly was more cunning and successful in his quest for fame. But one thing that has been proven in this war of words; that the modern press has a very pervasive presence in the shaping of hero-myths for the public.

The most striking aspect of linking the press to Arctic explorers is that the origins lay solidly with one person: James Gordon Bennett Sr. in the 1830s. He proved that the world could be intoxicated by the exciting reports about heroic struggles in the wilderness to master nature. Had Bennett preferred a more staid version of journalism over the sensational, he would not have played such a major role in helping to shape the public image of the hero-myth or the modern images of the Arctic. Bennett helped society move away from the sublime and picturesque to view the Arctic in real, if not sensationalised, methods. The Cook/Peary war was an equal struggle for public recognition of the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald*, and it was dictated by their commercial interests, mainly their sponsorships of American expeditions to the region. The controversy showed that the press was capable of reaching the loftiest of heights with regards to sensationalism. And, although publishing reports of a questionable nature (whether sanctioned by the press and/or the explorers themselves) and assailing rival press competitors were practices considered acceptable in the past, they were now being questioned by the public.

These events highlight the significant role of the press in Arctic exploration throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Newspapers, their editors,

and reporters, were more influential in increasing the public's awareness of these regions than has previously been realised. Not only did the press in America sponsor a number of American expeditions to the Arctic to search for Franklin, the North Pole, or scientific knowledge, the amount and style of the press coverage helped create a strong interest in the public about exploration and explorers. From these articles came books, readers, photographs, and later films and radio plays.

Another conclusion can be drawn about Arctic exploration in the nineteenth century; the role of science was variable from country to country, depending upon their reasons for being in the Arctic in the first place. Although there were explorers like Rae, Richardson, and Hall who were genuinely interested in the scientific and ethnographic knowledge they could come away with from the Arctic, there were still countless others who were more interested in the adventure aspect. Although adventure validated the expeditions, most people did not want to know about the scientific information. They wanted to hear about the tales of hardship and misery. Nationalism also played a small role in covering the expeditions' progresses. The American and British press tended to focus on their own countrymen in the Arctic. Very rarely were foreign expeditions covered, and those that were, certainly not were touted as heroic figures.

From the Cook/Peary controversy came some valid questions about sovereignty over the Arctic. Who actually owns it, even to this day, is still an important question for many northern nations, indigenous or not. Regardless of the intents of the earlier photographers and explorers to the region or the purposes to which these images were originally put, the existence today of historic photographs and journals permits Arctic peoples to repossess their histories and to reassert sovereignty over their cultures[134].

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[134] Pamela Stern, "The History of Canadian Photography...", 51.

The next conclusion is that there was no relationship between the success of an expedition and the press coverage it received. Cook and Peary received the same amount of press coverage in Britain that the search for Franklin did, and this is still far more coverage than any political, social, or economic event at the same time. The men who received the most in depth attention were still the failures, like Franklin and Greely, because the press could exploit the real (or not) sensationalism surrounding cannibalism, murder, and death.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, travel narratives tended to exaggerate the sublime or the picturesque, thus giving an inaccurate vision of the Arctic. By resorting to such clichés, there was little factual accuracy in the explorers' words. But the British and American public did not know any better. As these aesthetics were replaced, and new and improved technologies allowed newspapers to become more accessible, the sensational views of the world began to take precedent. As mentioned before, one reason this happened was the publishers' and explorers' desires to make their accounts as excitable as possible, and therefore, as sellable to a mass audience as possible. Explorers travelled to areas with preconceived notions of what the region was like before they arrived, thanks to previous travel narratives. The explorers had already drawn their own conclusions about the Arctic. They were then sensitive to data that confirmed those notions and insensitive to contradictory findings. In some cases, the explorers invented their visions of the Arctic to satisfy the public's desire for adventure and heroism. These errors on judgement were then perpetuated by journalists who had little, or no, experience in the Arctic.

It is ironic then that the very first sensationalist reports written by reporters in the 1850s were actually hoping to find "the real" truth behind the myths of the Arctic. Unlike the men who followed them, reporters like McGhan, and Gilder were talented enough writers to make life in the Arctic seem truly wild and unforgiving to those who had no clue about the region. They were examples of travel-writers though presenting a sensationalist

view of the world around them, still managed to give detailed and sensitive descriptions of the Arctic that endured for decades.

Though in all of this the underlying goal for these journalists and editors was not the accuracy of the reports, nor the scientific achievements made, nor the fascination of the landscape, but the sheer controversies and tragedies that shaped the hero-myths of the Arctic explorer. Had Franklin survived, he would not have been as revered as he is. Had Cook and Peary both agreed who *really* got to the Pole first, the press would not waged an all out press war to boost sales. Had Rae not decided to mention his cannibalism theories in 1854, cannibalism would not have remained such a scandalous and often reported about tragedy throughout the rest of the century. And certainly for the vast majority of newspapers in both America and Britain, this kind of boosting then tearing down the hero was far more important than scientific facts. What mattered were sales: how many and how fast. But one thing is certain--the press had a huge role to play in the perpetuation of the hero-myth of the Arctic explorers. It is interesting to speculate how the press might operate today had there not been a need to sensationalise events then.

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